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MISS SLIMMENS'

BOARDING HOUSE.

By the Author of

"A BAD BOY'S DIARY," "MISS SLIMMENS' WINDOW,"

ETC., ETC.

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MISS SLIMMENS' BOARDING HOUSE.

CHAPTER I.

"SINGLE GENTLEMEN PREFERRED."

[AS Pennyville grew larger and more fashionable, the business of the new milliner from Boston rapidly increased, while very many of Miss Slimmens' oldest and most reliable customers deserted the little shop, climbing up a pair of stairs to give their patronage to the showy establishment, whose windows flaunted nearly the whole stock of the possessor, above the first-floor dry-goods store of brick, new, and three stories high, which had now become the centre of attraction to the feminine portion of the village—flaunting its stock right in the ancient face of the weather-worn sign across the way. This was too much for human nature, and especially woman-nature, to endure. There is a time when "patience ceases to be a virtue." Miss Slimmens felt that *that* time had arrived; and, two years after that tragic event which made such melancholy inroads upon her heart and fortune, the shop was closed, the sign was

taken down, and the Boston milliner was left in possession of the field.

Let not her sympathizers suppose from this that Miss Slimmens was vanquished. To that indomitable spirit there was no such word as fail. A card, which appeared in the *Pennyville Eagle*, will explain her purposes sufficiently to those able to appreciate the advantages which such a step must ensure to a lady of her business habits and matrimonial aspirations:

WANTED—A few genteel young men, as boarders, at No. 90 Washington street, by a lady without family, who has more room than she requires. All the comforts of a home secured. Single gentlemen preferred.

Our fair friend had run some risk, as she had been obliged to invest quite a large part of the money which the sale of her stock in trade, etc., brought in fitting up the establishment indicated in the advertisement as No. 90. Dora, poor child, had lost her mother, and, being without other friend or protector in the world, had accepted the offer of her mistress to remain with her, assisting in the superintendence of the household as a compensation for her keeping.]

Yes, gentlemen, I really trust we shall; I trust we shall get along admirality together. I depend upon you both for guidance and support. Hitherto my efforts to obtain a compen-

sation have been principally among my own sex; and, although there are a few honorable exceptions, I *must* say, as a general thing, women are dreadfully down upon one of their own sex who is struggling for a livelihood, especially when, like the one who is now before you, she is timid and unexperienced. I wonder if I shall ever, in my maturer years, arrive at an age when I shall be less sensitive and more capable of taking care of myself? Oh, gentlemen, I have suffered; but it "boots not to remember" the past. With the sweetest of Boston's many bards, let me exclaim:

"Oh, faint not, in a world like this,
And thou shalt know ere long,
Know how sublime a thing it is
To suffer and be strong!"

What's that you remarked, Mr. Little? You think this butter must have suffered? Oh, Mr. Little, how sharp you are, now—he, he! I was not aware that it had the slightest unpleasant flavor, and my digestive faculties have always been considered rather *too* critical. I paid the highest market price for it. But that's only one of many instances of how an unprotected female is imposed upon. *How* did you say you took your tea, Mr. Grayson? Without sugar or milk? I declare, what a curious coincidence! Why, that's the way I take my

mine! It's the only way to take tea—don't you think so? All true lovers of

"The cup which cheers, but not depreciates,"

—as "Gray's Elegy," I think it is, has it—consider its delicate aurora injured by any addi-

tion. What's that, Mr. Little? Old people are apt to take it without, but, for your part, give you plenty of the fixings along with it? Oh, certainly, as much as you choose. But I'm sure Mr. Grayson is not old, if he is a wid-

ower. How old are you, Mr. Grayson, if it isn't a secret? Rising of forty, perhaps? Fifty-six! Just twice my age. I never should have guessed it in the world. But I'm glad there's *somebody* who has arrived at maturity to give an air of dignity to our circle. We shall be a very pleasant family, I trust. I shall do my best to study the tastes and peculiarities of each in order to consult them.

A daughter of mine! Dora a *daughter* of mine! Oh, Mr. Grayson, you know not what you ask! Nothing but your being a stranger in this vicinity excuses so strange a question. Surely you must have noticed that I am accosted by the prognostic of *Miss* Slimmens. I am unmarried, and have ever been, Mr. Grayson; my heart is still my own; my affections are virgin as the unkissed bloom upon the grape.

Vergin' upon fifty, did you say, Mr. Little? I'm sure I don't understand you, and it's well for you that I don't. Besides, Dora is too old to be a child of mine. We are generally taken to be sisters. She has a good deal of my expression about the mouth and eyes—the same sort of smile. You speak true; she has a sweet countenance. We are said to resemble each other considerably, although we are no relation. She's a poor girl, without father or mother, that I've taken and made what she is. She's my adopted sister now; and if I do well in the

boarding-house, I intend to take her in as pardner before the end of the year, which will be doing a good deal, for she won't have as much to put in the general stock as would buy a dozen of eggs, whilst I have already infested nigh on to a thousand dollars.

Have some of the chipped beef, Mr. Turner —do! Won't you have some more, Mr. Little? You're not fond of chips?—he! he! I've always heard you were a witty person, but I hope you won't be too severe at my expense.

Yes, Dora's a nice girl; but she's poor, awfully poor. If anybody thought of marrying her, I don't know where the wedding-dress would come from. It's a terrible pity she wasn't born an heiress, like myself. What's that, Mr. Little? I might lend her *my* bridal-robes, if she should chance to want 'em? Really, now, I wasn't aware that I had any; I cut 'em up for bunnit silk months ago; besides, what should *you* know about 'em, when they've never seen the light to this blessed day, and I keep the key of the chest myself? And as for that matter, he's only jesting, Mr. Grayson, as I never had any bridal-robes, of course, seeing I never was married. Dear me, it's uncomfortably warm here — don't you find it so? Bridget, open that door, and bring some more bread—one slice, and cut it in two—mind, girl!—don't you see the plates are empty?

Yes, gentlemen, I trust we shall prove to be kindred spirits. There is nothing more absorbing to the contemplation than a united family circle, where congenial aspirations bind them together. I am young to assume the responsibility of feeding and clothing—of course, I am speaking metaphistically of the clothing—so many of the opposite sex; but I intend to endeavor to fulfil the charge—to be a sister to you all. I hope my example will be such as to keep the younger members of this interesting group in the rectified path of probable and truth. If any of you stand in need of advice, come to me. If any of you wish shirt-buttons replaced, come to me. If any of you ever feel lonely, and in need of the tender constellations of home, come to me. If any of you wish your cravats and pocket-handkerchiefs hemmed, come to me. It shall be done freely, and without charge. My object in establishing this boarding-house has not been simply to make money—to feed, like a coroner, on the hearts of my victims, charging them a high price, and giving them cheap provisions in return, while I withhold that sympathy and intimacy which is more precious than bread and meat. My *principal* object has been to establish a *home*—a place where young men, away from their mothers, may find, for a moderate reimbursement, the comforts to which they were accus-

tomed before they left the shelter of their childhood's roof. So plausible an object ought to succeed. I feel that it will. Already, at this, our first meal, I count before me six of the most respectable young gentlemen of Pennyville, and this interesting stranger, who intends to become a permeate residence, and who has brought along with him initials of the highest character. I have forebodings that I shall succeed beyond my fondest anticipations. In the mean time, my rent is high, and provisions—as *you* are aware, Mr. Turner, being in the grocery business—are very dear; which accounts for the price I have fixed upon as the weekly remuneration for what you receive. I would fain allow filthy lucre to remain unmentioned in my plans, but, as long as this cannot be, I know that to your noble and generous minds it will be a pleasure to contribute towards the support of an unprotected female obliged to abandon the millinery business to which she had clung for the last—five years; and that a dollar more or less will never be weighed in the balance by those of you who have sisters, or who expect to have wives.

Yes, gentlemen, I throw myself— Really, Mr. Little, you drink considerable tea for a young man. This is your fourth cup, I believe. If you don't look out, you'll be sallow and withered up before you know it; too

much tea is bad for young people. What's that? Am I a very great tea-drinker? No, of course I'm not; two cups is enough for me, at my age. When I get to be forty, maybe I'll feel the need of more. They say tea makes people grow old dreadfully fast, and sugar in it spoils the teeth. 'Twould be a pity for *your* teeth to go, Mr. Little; they're beautiful now. He! he! thank you! mine *are* pretty good. I've been told— Hey?—better than they used to be several years ago? Why, yes; I've no doubt they're better than they were when I was sheddin' my first set. Children's teeth is apt to be irregular about that time. Won't you have some more of the preserves, Mr. Grayson? Don't be backward about saying so, if you will, for Bridget can bring in some, if anybody wishes 'em. There's plenty in the cellar.

Well, gentlemen, our first meal together has taken place. This is an important error in my life. Please remember that the parlor is always at your service. I shall generally be there myself, evenings, to give it a familiar aspect. There's a guitar in there—I play on it myself some—have been learning lately on purpose to add another charm to *home*. I sing some. So does Dora. I should be happy to take a duet with any of you, at any time. I've also got a bodoor. It's right back of the parlor. It was

originally invented for a bedroom, but, as I told Dora, a bodoor would be more appropriate. They're quite the style. And then they have such a reclusive air. They're a sweet place to retire to when one has something to confide, or feel weary of the prometheas throng. It will be one of my favorite hounts. If any one who needs advice, or has got the headache, or anything to confide or mistrust, he is welcome to Alvira's bodoor.

CHAPTER II.

SHE IS CONFIDENTIAL WITH DORA.

WE'RE getting on swimmingly, Dora. It's a money-making business, when it's managed right—better, on the hull, than fixing over old bunnits. I've cleared nigh on to eighteen dollars this week, over and above all expenses. And then, you see, child, our chances for receiving the attentions of the opposite sex are so much better. You're too much in your infancy, as it were, to attach much importance to this advantage yet; but the time'll come when you'll depreciate it as it deserves. Why, the gentlemen scarcely take their eyes off you when you're at table! They don't eat much more than half the usual amount. But I don't mind that; what I consider is *your* interests; and that's why I've decided that you'd better not eat at the general table. You're too modest a girl—too much like me—to wish to be the sinecure of so many young men's eyes. I hate it myself, like poison; but of course *somebody* must reside at the head of the table, and so I'm actually impelled to. It goes against the grain, though I'm getting a little used to it. You shall have some of the best of vittles

saved, and be waited on like the rest of us, but I guess you'd better eat by yourself.

That puts me in mind! I've invited Mr. Barker to bring in his flute, and we'll get up a concert this evening. I'm glad so many of the board-

ers have musical abilities; it's such a nice way of getting 'em into the parlor of evenings. Mr. Little's promised to keep his violin over here after this, and not at the store. He makes it an excuse for staying out evenings that he's practising; but once get his violin here, and

we'll know what's really going on. He's the handsomest young man in Pennyville—Mr. Little is. Don't you think so? But he says such impertinent things, and keeps the boarders laughing at things that he says, which I can't overhear. I declare I'd give him his walking-ticket if he didn't pay such a good price for that front room, and if I hadn't hopes that he'd some time come round and yield to the fascinations which *somebody* flings around him. There, Dora, you needn't turn so red; of course I wasn't thinking of a poor girl like yourself catching Hal Little yet awhile. Mr. Barker's got a real talent for music. You can't think how pleased he was to discover that I sung and played the guitar. He said he should frequently join me in a duet. He asked me what were my favorite songs. I told him Moore's Melodies; he said they were also his'n. He said he should be delighted to hear me sing "Love's Young Dream" or the "Last Rose of Summer," dressed in character. Wasn't that a charming idea? I'm determined to carry it out; though I think I should prefer "Love's Young Dream" to the other, as more approbrious. I'm going to surprise him some time soon, by making an appointment to meet me in my bodoor, and, when he enters, find me sitting upon a pile of cushions, with my guitar in my lap, dressed in Oriental custom, as Moore

describes some of his heroines. Which would you choose, if you were me? I've always thought you'd good taste, Dora, and I shall be likely to abide by your decision.

And, oh, Dora, I've got a secret to tell you—one of the greatest secrets of my life. You can't think how queer it makes me feel to be having *such* a secret to confide. I don't know as anything will come of it, but it looks very much like it. And what makes it so delightful is the mystery which encircles it. I don't know when anything so mysterious has ever before happened to me. Look here! I found this in the sugar-bowl this morning. I was rather late, and several of the boarders had taken their places before I arrived; so I don't know who to lay it to. Wasn't that a sweet depository for a love-letter?—such an antique idea! When I took it out, I glanced around, but nobody looked the least conscientious. Mr. Little was carving the beefsteak as if it never would come in two—and, in fact, it *was* rather tough: Mr. Barker was looking at me as innocent as if nothing but coffee was in his thoughts, and the rest were just as usual. Do you know the handwriting? Neither do I. It's a nice plain hand, isn't it? I didn't venture to read it until breakfast was over and I had taken refuse in my bodoor. My heart palpitated uncommonly fast as I broke the seal. See here! it's poetry.

It seems to be a parable of "The Vale of Avoca," a great favorite of mine, which I was singing to Mr. Barker night before last, which makes me guess he is the author, though two other gentlemen were present at the time, either of which may have been the one. How I wish I knew! But of course I shall find out. I intend to ascertain this evening, to a certainty, whether it was Mr. Barker. It was *one* of the objects I had in view when I invited him to a solitary duet in my bodoor to-night. It's nearly time now, and he's very punctual; but I guess we'll have time to peruse it. It is called

THE MEETING OF THE LOVERS.

There is not in this wide world a maiden so sweet
As the one in whose bosom all gentle thoughts meet;
Oh, the last rays of feeling and life must depart
Ere the bloom of that maiden shall fade from my heart.

Yet it was not that *Nature* had over her spread
The purest of pearl-white and brightest of red;
'Twas *not* her soft magic of beauty or youth—
'Twas something quite different from such things, in truth!

'Twas that she, the beloved of my bosom, was *near*—
That she made even common provisions seem dear;
And I felt how the best charms of life may increase
When we have them served up by a Goddess of Grease.

Sweet maiden, Alvira, how calm could I rest
In thy bo—door of sweets, with the one I love best;
Where the storms which we feel in this cold world should cease,
And where love and economy mingle in peace.

Now *some* people might object, Dora, to the *practical* tone of what I have read you, but for my part I have ever thought that a proper medicum was the one to be preserved. It is a precept upon which I have ever acted, with *one* exception, to which you are better knowing than anybody else, save the villain who caused me to make such a fool of myself. When I've decided to my own satisfaction who placed 'em in the sugar-bowl, I'm going to return an answer in the saucer of his teacup. I've got one nearly finished now. If Mr. Barker's the one, I'll find out before ten o'clock this night. I thought he looked a little sensitive at the table this noon. I saw Mr. Little winking at him—yes, actually winking—although he didn't mean me to see it. If he wasn't so provoking good-looking and liberal, I declare I believe I'd let that best room to the first application. I wish you'd see if my guitar is in tune; you can get it in tune so much quicker than I can, and the clock's striking seven now.

There! I hear his voice in the parlor now. I wonder why he don't come immediately into the bodoor. He and them others are in a great glee about something; I hope it isn't about the corned beef we had for dinner. Mr. Little said he had become so permanently corned since he'd been put upon rations that reports to his disadvantage had already become freely circu-

lated in Pennyville; and Mr. Turner said he was afraid we had all been guilty of cannibalism without knowing it; he was confident we had been living off Lot's wife for a week. I shall have to have fowls to-morrow, I perceive, though I didn't appear to hear 'em.

There, Dora, he's pitching his flute now. I think he plays like a second Morpheus. Do hear how sweetly he runs up the gamut! He's an ostrich in himself! Oh, if it *should* prove to be him who wrote—— Dora, dear, he's coming this way! Hadn't you better slip down in the kitchen and see how Bridget's doing the knives? I'm dreadfully afraid she puts the handles in hot water; and after that you may count the towels she's ironed, and then you may—well, no matter what—go to your room if you want to. I'll tell you to-morrow the result of our—— Hurry, child, and shut that door securely after you; I'm getting to be dreadfully sensitive to draughts.

CHAPTER III.

HER OPINION OF WOMEN BOARDERS IN GENERAL.

THE autograph of the breakfast-table! I'm going to be the autograph of my own breakfast-table, gentlemen. If our sex don't begin to assume responsibilities *some* time, I'm sure I don't know when they'll be recorded to them; and, for my part, I feel fully equal to the task. I trust there will ever be a literary atmosphere hanging over this dining-room. Fried onions, Mr. Porter; those are fried onions; a very healthy breakfast dish, indeed. I shall do all that I can to promote the discursive tendencies of the young gentlemen about me. I'm interested in all the leading topics of the day, and nothing would give me more glowing satisfaction than to see them successfully promoted. I have thought of instituting a debating society in the house, the questions to be argued while we're at meals. It's very promotive of digestion to talk a good deal while you're eating. What's that, Mr. Little? And very saving of vittals? Well, now, you do put the queerest construction upon my conduct, which I shouldn't put up with from some, only I know you're so

full of jokes that they just run over without your knowing it. What do you think of gastronomy, Mr. Grayson? It's a science very much talked about since what-you-call-him went up in his balloon. Gas is taking the place of

kerosene and candles in most cities. Dear me! I wish they'd introduce it into Pennyville! It would have a very imposing effect to see the rows of lamps all lighted up along Main Street of a dark night. I should love to promenade beneath their bewitching influence, hanging upon

the protecting arm of one of the sterner sex. Methinks it would awaken all the poetry of my inner nature. I should admire to have a gas-burner in my bodoor. Do you recall last evening, Mr. Barker, just at that peculiar moment, how provoking it was to have to snuff the candle? If I'd have been you, I'd have let it gone without snuffing. I broke a guitar-string, I was so put out. You are sure there's no need of any gas in this house? Why so, Mr. Little? Now, you *must* tell me or I'll never forgive you. Oh, you saucy creature, you—he! he! he!—you wish to flatter me! I suppose my eyes *are* rather bright—I have been told so, so often—but they are not quite so luminous as all that comes to.

I had application for two new boarders yesterday, but I told them I was full, for I would not have taken them in for ten dollars a week apiece. Why? Because they were women—young women and school-teachers, at that! Didn't I see through their wanting to board here as easy as through a pane of glass? Humph! there never was a young lady school-teacher yet that wasn't wanting to get married. They knew that this was a favorite boarding-house for gentlemen—that there were several marriageable young men here, and they thought, no doubt, there would be fine times. If they had had any modesty, they wouldn't have

wanted to board where there were so many men, as long as they had no protectors, no father or brother to see after them. One of them evidently thought herself very handsome. They ain't the first I've turned away. Women boarders are a pest and a nuisance. You never found anybody that was *willing* to have 'em, though some is obliged to take them, that's got families to support, which, I'm thankful to say, *I* haven't. They are everlastingly in the way; their noses are in everything. If there's ever a time or an hour when you wish they'd keep their rooms, that's the very minute they choose to leave 'em. They spy out everything, and they're everywhere. Supposing them two teachers had a' come here and taken rooms—of what earthly use do you suppose my bodoor would a' been to me? Would it have been mine or theirs most, do you think? Humph! their flounces and their curls would fill up every corner; they'd have my guitar, and be breaking the strings, and screaming "Sleeping, I dreamed, love," or "I have not loved lightly," until I was distracted. Or, supposing it was a married woman, of course she'd have a "darling"—a squalling, angry, cross, impudent little thing, with molasses on its mouth and dirty fingers, breaking my dishes at table, down in the kitchen several times a day for "a piece," and getting grease on my parlor carpet. His mother

wouldn't want to allow anything for his board, but he'd eat more than two common-sized men, and she'd want the privilege of doing his washing in the laundry, and clear-starching her own musings once a fortnight. She'd be asking the cook all kinds of questions, and peeking into the cellar, and the sugar-barrel, and the pantry after musty pork, or cockroaches, or hashed meat; and if she should discover a dead fly on the dining-room floor, she'd have cramps in her stomach and lose her appetite for a month. My girl would have to trot to the door to let in all her callers, and if I'd any company myself, she'd be sure to drop in and make herself agreeable as long as they stayed; and about once a week she'd have her three sisters, or her father and mother, or her dear Cousin John to tea, always, of course, when the table was crowded. I hate and I despise 'em. I'll have to be worse off than I am now before I take women boarders for a living. I'd rather bleach bunnits and live in a brimstun-barrel, like old Diagonal in his tub.

Speaking of bunnits puts you in mind to ask the meaning of that shadow of one you see on my sign-board? Ahem! you must know, Mr. Grayson, what, being a new-comer, you were not aware of, that a relative of mine was once in the millenary business, and, as I had the sign already constructed, I thought it an excellent

piece of economy to have it repainted for my present occupation; but the painter hasn't put on enough coats, or else it's struck through.

Why do I say "Single gentlemen preferred"? Oh, Mr. Little, you're enough to puzzle an inexperienced person like myself. If it wasn't for those black eyes of yours—but a woman can never be offended long, with them smiling her into good nature. Of course, if a man wasn't a single gentleman, he'd be married; and if he was married, he would have a wife, and would be wanting to get her boarded, too, and I just expressed my sentiments upon that subject. That's the reason, the *only* reason. My breast is innocent of any other. I *could* have no other motive. Single gentlemen are quiet and nice, and pay their board-bill without quarrelling. They are *never* in the way; I'd ruther they'd be about than not.

It's a pleasure to me to do a favor to one of the opposite sex who has no mother or sister to go to when he wants advice or sympathy! To bathe the aching brow; to whisper consolation to the drooping spirits; to pillow the weary head, so to speak, in a figurative sense; to cling like the ivy to the oak. How *beau*tiful is woman's mission! Gentlemen, if you suffer, let me know.

More milk, did you say? There isn't another drop in the pitcher. I don't know what be-

comes of it, unless that girl throws it away. I take three pints a day, stiddy, and that, for a family of nine persons, *ought* to do. Will I ask Bridget to bring in some more fish? There's no more broiled, Mr. Porter. *I've* known *half* a mackerel to furnish the table for eight persons; but we had a whole one this morning, and hash besides. I guess Bridget got it too fresh.

What's become of Miss Adams? She *prefers* to take her meals by herself, I presume, since she insists upon doing it. But you'll see her this evening; which reminds me, gentlemen—stop a moment, Mr. Grayson, if you'll be so good—which reminds me to say that I shall expect you *all* to consider yourselves engaged to me—for this evening, I mean. Oh, Mr. Little! he! he! he! of course, I didn't mean *that!* I am going to give a party—not a very large one, but most of the aristocracy of Pennyville will be invited—in honor of my birthday. This is my birthday, gentlemen; but I'll not expect your congratulations until this evening. How many strokes of the lash am I entitled to? Oh, Mr. Little! get out! get o-u-t! I *never* was saluted by one of the masculine sex, never! You sha'n't kiss me! you sha'n't! I'll die first. Mr. Porter, Mr. Grayson, rescue me, oh-h-h! Now you needn't say that, you naughty, naughty man! You *were* a-trying to kiss me; you know you

were. And you'd have made out in a minute more, if you'd only kept trying. Faint heart never won fair lady. Seriously now, how old am I? Guess. "Fifty-four!" Do you mean to insult me, Mr. Smith, or are you but in jest? "Seventeen." That's almost as far the *other* way, Mr. Little. "Twenty-five." Yes, Mr. Porter, you've guessed it *exactly*. I'm twenty-five to-day. I intend now to lay aside all my youthful follies, and behave like one of our older young ladies. I suppose I may *almost* consider myself an old maid! But I intend to yield gracefully. A person who has refused more offers than she is years of age can afford to allow herself to be called an old maid. I am willing the whole world should know my precise age. But I'll not retain you any longer this morning. There'll be dinner as usual, to-day, but no tea, as I'll have refreshments this evening, and will be arranging the tables at that time.

(*Night.*) Well, Dora, the party went off splendidly, *I* think. Not an incident to mar the occasion. The chicken-sallid didn't go round; but I guess nobody noticed it, as there was plenty of cold ham, and enough left to last the boarders three days, which'll save cooking.

My dress was very becoming, I'm sure, from the way that everybody looked at it; and Mr.

Little whispered to me that he had never seen me looking so well. What a tormenting, saucy, fascinating young man he is! To confide to you the truth, I prefer him to all my other boarders, for all he says such wicked things. I like to see men a *little* wicked, don't you? It's so delicious not to know just how naughty they're going to dare to be. He come so near making out to kiss me this morning, right before all the others. I don't see what he give up for just as he'd conquered my last remaining particle of resistance. What are you smiling at, Dora? Take this pin out of my back braids, and help me get off these ringlets. Lay them in the box there, careful; them cost me five dollars, besides the braids. It was very good of Mr. Barker to play on his flute so much; it's so convenient to have a musical deficient in the family. He's rather stiff in his manners, and awful humbly; but he's remarkably obliging about his music. I got pitched rather high to sing "Twilight Dews," but he carried me through with his flute.

I'm of the opinion that the party will pay. The eatables didn't cost very much, and none of the remnants will be wasted. I sha'n't have much cooking to do for several days. I've got one new boarder by it—that clerk in the shoe store—he asked me, this evening, if I'd any more accommodations, and said he'd like to

board with me. You see it gives an air of sociability, such as young gentlemen like; and the bodoor, and the guitar, and me being so gay and all. That's just what I give the party for. I hope Mr. Grayson wasn't put out. He went to bed before supper. These old widowers are so particular and dyspeptical! But he's rich, and he's genteel, and I don't mean to offend him. If things continue as they promise now, I sha'n't keep boarders all my life. I shall make all the money I can while I do keep 'em, so as to be able to buy me a setting-out suitable to a merchant's wife. Will you hand me my night-cap? I must have some thicker ones made, for I'm getting the rheumatism in my head, taking off all my hair so of nights. Blow out the candle. Whew! how cold it's a-getting.

CHAPTER IV.

A TERRIBLE ACCIDENT.

DORA! Dora! Dora! wake up—wake up, I say! Don't you smell something burning? Wake up, child! Don't you smell fire? Good Lord! so do I. I thought I wasn't mistaken. The room's full of smoke. Oh, dear! what'll we do? Don't stop to put on your petticoat. We'll all be burned to death. Fire! fire! fire! fire!

Yes, there is! I don't know where! It's all over—our room's all in a blaze, and Dora won't come out till she gets her dress on. Mr. Little, you *sha'n't* go in—I'll hold you—you'll be killed, just to save that chit of a girl, when —I —I—— He's gone—rushed right into the flames! Oh, my house! my furniture! all my earnings! Can't anything be done? Fire! fire! fire! Call the fire-engines! ring the dinner-bell! Be quiet! How can I be quiet? Yes, it is all in flames—I saw them myself! Where's my silver spoons? Oh! where's my teeth, and my silver soup-ladle? Let me be! I'm going out in the street before it's too late! Oh, Mr. Grayson! have you got water? have you found the place? are they bringing water?

Did you say the fire was out? Was that you that spoke, Mr. Little? I thought you were burned up, sure; and there's Dora, too. How did they get it out? My clothes-closet was on fire, and the room, too! We would

have been smothered in five minutes more if we hadn't waked up! But it's all out now, and no damage done, but my dresses destroyed and the carpets spoiled. Thank the Lord, if that's the worst! But it *ain't* the worst.

Dora, come along this minute to my room. I don't care if it is cold, and wet, and full of smoke. Don't you see—don't you see I'm in my night-clothes? I never thought of it before. I'm ruined, ruined completely! Go to bed, gentlemen; get out of the way as quick as you can. Dora, shut the door. Hand me that candle; I want to look at myself in the glass. To think that all those gentlemen should have seen me in this fix! I'd rather have perished in the flames. It's the very first night I've worn these flannel night-caps, and to be seen in 'em! Good gracious! how old I do look! Not a spear of hair on my head, scarcely, and this red night-gown and old petticoat on, and my teeth in the tumbler, and the paint all washed off my face, and scarred besides! It's no use! I never—never can again make any of *those* men believe I'm only twenty-five, and I felt so sure of some of them.

Oh, Dora Adams! *you* needn't look pale; *you've* lost nothing. I'll warrant Mr. Little thought you never looked so pretty as in that ruffled gown, and your hair all down over your shoulders. He says you were fainting from the smoke when he dragged you out. You must be a little fool to be afraid to come out looking *that* way. They say that new boarder is a drawing-master, and I seen some of his pictures yesterday; he had some such ridiculous things.

He'll caricature me for the amusement of the young men, I know. Only think how my portrait would look taken to-night! and he'll have it, I'm sure, for I noticed him looking at me—the first that reminded me of my situation after the fire was put out. Well, there's but one thing to be done, and that's to put a bold face on it. I can't sleep any more to-night; besides, the bed's wet, and it's beginning to get daylight. I'll go to work and get myself ready for breakfast, and I'll pretend to something—I don't know just what—to get myself out of this scrape, if I can.

Good-morning, gentlemen, good-morning! We had quite a fright, last night, didn't we? Dora and I came pretty naar paying dear for a little frolic. You see we were dressing up in character, to amuse ourselves, and I was all fixed up for to represent an old woman, and had put on a grey wig and an old flannel gown that I found, and we'd set up pretty late, having some fun all to ourselves; and I expect Dora must have been pretty sleepy when she was putting some of the things away, and set fire to a dress in the closet without noticing it. I've lost my whole wardrobe, nigh about, by her carelessness; but it's such a mercy we wasn't burned in our bed that I don't feel to complain so much on that account. Isn't it curious how I got caught, dressed up like my grandmother?

We didn't suppose we were going to appear before so large an audience when we planned out our little frolic. What character did Dora assume? Really, Mr. Little, I was so scared last night that I disremember. She took off *her* rigging before she went to bed. Don't you think I'd personify a pretty good old woman, gentlemen—ha! ha!—for a lady of my age? What's that, Mr. Little? You wish I'd make you a present of that night-cap, to remember me by? Of course, I've no further use for it? Of course I haven't. It's one of Bridget's, that I borrowed for the occasion, and I've got to give it back to her. Have some coffee, Mr. Grayson—do! I've got cream for it this morning. Mr. Smith, help yourself to some of the beefsteak. It's a very cold morning—fine weather out of doors. Eat all you can, all of you. Have you any profiles to take yet, Mr. Gamboge? I *may* make up my mind to set for mine before you leave us; I've always thought I should have it taken some time. In character? He! he! Mr. Little, you're so funny! But you'll excuse *me* this morning, as I had such a fright last night. I must go and take up that wet carpet.

CHAPTER V.

CONFIDENTIAL, BETWEEN MISS SLIMMENS AND HERSELF.

It seems to me as if everything had gone wrong since that night of the fire. There's always something sly going on between them provoking, sassy young fellows. I don't believe I can ever pull the wool over their eyes again, after that flannel night-cap. It's only last night at tea, Mr. Little asked to borrow it. He said he'd heard his friend, Mrs. Partington, had taken rheumatism in her head, and he wanted to send her the pattern. Even Bridget must cut up like the rest of 'em, and give warning that she's going away, because I wouldn't allow her to have "a follower." What does *she* want of a follower, I'd like to know. Here she's got as many as three after her, and *I*—*I*, who've been trying for twenty years, haven't made out yet! The ugly, homely, impertinent thing! let her go, with her string of followers after her! I won't sit solitary in my bodoor of evenings, thinking of my lonesomeness, and hear her giggling and flirting with her beaux in the kitchen. It makes me desperate. Let her go, I say!

I'll hire a girl so old, and humbly, and cross that nobody'll think of speaking to her. Besides, how do I know what Bridget may be giving to them creatures? She treats 'em, of course. I missed a piece of mince pie last week, and I've no lock on the tea-caddy yet, though I've a pretty sharp eye to it. And there's Dora been crying and pouting round so I've been obliged to ask her back to the first table, and keep her in the parlor more of evenings—not that I care for her doleful face, but she will be telling Mr. Little that I don't treat her well, and then there'll be trouble in the camp. I'm *awful* afraid she will catch him yet! It looks like it. But she mustn't, and she *shan't*, if I have to tell fibs to break it up.

Oh, dear me! I do look terrible old—there's no use denying it. I can paint my cheeks, but I can't fill up the hollows. I do wish them French folks that understand such things so well would invent something to fill up the wrinkles. I'd pay any price, for I feel it is "now or never," "sink or swim," "live or die." It went all over me last evening, when Mr. Barker was singing the Rover's Song:

"This night, or never, my bride thou shalt be!"

Why won't somebody give me such a chance as that? I'd go, if it rained pitchforks, and I had to climb out a six-story window and slide down

a rope-ladder to reach his arms. I'd risk everything, even my refutation, I'm getting so responding.

Howsomever, if I can't make love, I can make

money, and I will. Maybe money will buy what female charms won't. It's a very good thing to depend on in case of an emergency. I've thirteen boarders now, and there's that new one coming to-morrow. I've calculated pretty closely, and, if I find there's nothing to be lost

by it, I'll calculate closer still. They're mighty pert, now, some of 'em; and I don't know how much more scrinching they'll bear without quitting the house; but I'll try the experiment as far as will do. When Mr. Little was in one of his funny tantrums yesterday, I told him I thought he found a great deal to amuse him. "Yes," he said, "he laughed to grow fat! He'd as soon get fat by laughing as by eating; and if he couldn't get what he paid for in the provision line, he was going to take it out in the cashinatory"—though what he meant by that, I don't quite understand. "Miss Slimmens," said he, looking at me as solemn as the grave, "we pay six dollars a week apiece for the inestimable privilege of being members of your family. What we *eat* is a secondary consideration. I would recommend your establishment to dyspeptics, for two reasons. Firstly, the richness and variety of the cullendary spread will not impair their digestive facilities, while the inducements to chacinatory exercise will very much invigorate them. Ahem! Miss Slimmens, it is indeed a privilege to be one of your interesting family. I should love to be considered as a son—as one of your own children—that is, of course, if you were a married lady, as you should be." And the impudent rogue looked so handsome and polite all the while, as if he thought I didn't reprehend him.

I saw him stealing glances at Dora. He didn't get any sugar in his tea to pay for *that* speech, but he didn't dare to ask for any. How he and the new border will get along together I can't guess. He's so full of his deviltry, and the new one told me he was studying for the ministry at the seminary. I knew he was the minit I sot eyes on him, with his gingham necktie, and his forlorn pantaloons, and his yellow hair sticking up so straight in front, and his meek voice. He thought I ought to take him for less than the regular price on account of his calling; and I've consented to do it, for he's young and green, not used to ladies' society, and so innocent there's no telling what influence might be gained over him by a woman who has had practice. It's much more probable I could bring him to propose than Mr. Little, and, if one pays a dollar a week less than the other, I've my own reasons for it. If the student should be shocked by the gay conversation of any of my other boarders, it'll be time enough then to make up my mind as to chances. "Never despair!" is my motto, and I'll act up to it a while longer, though I've felt heartsick and discouraged lately, 'specially since the fire. I've been dreadfully low-spirited, and that's made the wrinkles show plainer than ever. I've felt awfully ugly, and I'm afraid I showed out my temper rather *too* plain once or twice. It's hard to keep in for-

ever, year after year, when one has as much to exasperate them as I've had.

As I said before, I'll make money, anyhow. I laid by twenty dollars last week, clear profits, which was partly owing to my getting that butter for twenty-seven cents a pound, and partly to Mr. Grayson being gone three days, for which no reduction was made, and partly to my giving up having biscuits or sass for tea. It's two dollars more'n I made any previous week. And now let me see how matters stand for *this* week. Ten boarders at six dollars a week would be sixty dollars, and them three clerks in the back room at five dollars each would be fifteen, which would be seventy-five dollars income, and it's all paid, every penny of it. Alvira Slimmens doesn't go on the trust principle. "Get as much as you can, and give as little in return," is the only principle upon which to do business, if a person wishes to prosper in this world. Then there was Barker had that young man here once to dinner and twice to tea, for which I added one dollar to the bill; and as the young man was so bashful that he didn't eat six mouthfuls, I consider it a clear profit of seventy-five cents. Then there was that dish Bridget broke; I paid thirty-five cents for it when it was new; it has been in use two years, and I deducted half a dollar out of her wages—profit, fifteen cents. Then there was

that turkey and that pair of geese which was so old that I made Farmer Goodman take off thirty-seven cents when we come to settle, though the age was certainly in my favor, as it took the boarders two meals to get through with 'em. Mr. Little wished I'd lend him *my* teeth, he said, 'cause if they got broke they could be replaced easier than his'n. Now let me look at my expense book:

Income, $76.15. Outgoes:	
Rent	$8.00
Fuel	5.50
Bridget's wages	2.00
Washerwoman's (paid in broken vittals)	0.00
Butcher	7.75
Salt fish	3.37
Eggs and chickens	1 88
Groceries and stores	20.30
Wood sawyer	75
Hole wore in dining-room carpet	50
Apples passed around Sunday evening	21
Pie-plate cracked	13
Candies	75
Pigeon sent to Mr. Grayson's room the day he was sick	30
Total	$51.44
Income	76.15
Profit	$24.71

Well, I declare! better and better! I don't want no better business than keeping boarders, so long as they all pay up and everything goes along as slick as it does now. Wouldn't that

"minister in emory," as they say, open his eyes if I should give him a glimpse at the state of affairs? A prospect of a pardnership in as money-making an establishment as this *ought* to be very engaging to a poor young man, with his way to make in the world. If he had money he could do a great deal of good—that is, if he got the handling of it, which is a matter to be settled afterwards.

I s'pose I must make Dora a present of a new dress before Christmas. The child *is* rather shabby, that's a fact! and she perked up the other day and told me she'd rather go out as a hired girl, and know what she *did* earn, than never to have nothing she could consider her own; if her services were of any value, she wished I'd settle how much, if it wasn't more than fifty cents a week, and let her have it to spend as she liked. I'd have to hire another girl if I let her go, and I don't think she costs me a dollar a week for clothes; besides, she keeps some of them young men here, I know. She's a pretty girl, there's no denying—modest, too. I'd give my whole possessions to be half as young and good-looking. Sometimes I think I'd stand a better chance if she wasn't around, and then again I'm afraid my boarders would go off, and I should not stand any chance at all.

I've half a mind to get her a blue merino. I

could well afford it; but then a Thibet will look just as well, at less cost. I'll get her a blue Thibet, and give her that black velvet cape of mine to cut up to trim it with. O dear! I wish I stood in her shoes, shabby as they are!

CHAPTER VI.

SHE GETS AN INVITATION TO THE CONCERT.

THERE'S to be a concert in town, this evening, gentlemen. The bill was throwed in the yard yesterday, and it's in the *Eagle* this morning. I suppose you've all noticed it. "The admired and celebrated Mme. Frizzolinda, assisted at the piano by Herr Blitzengruntz." Foreigners, you see, which will be so delightful, as Pennyville is but seldom honored by a visit from genuine stars which have ariz and shone in a foreign firmament. I wonder what she calls him *Her* Blitzengruntz for? Perhaps she owns him, or has some special claim upon him. 'Tanyrate it sounds pleasant; it must be charming for a woman to possess some one that she can call all her own. O dear! I'm so rejoiced that there's going to be such a splendid affair once more in our quiet little village! We've a great deal of musical taste here, don't you think so, Mr. Barker? Yes, I'm rejoiced—though not on my own account. It's nothing to me, personally; but I sympathize with those who will be permitted to be present. A lady situated as I am can hardly dare to attend such a place without an es-

cort, and of course I do not expect an invitation. The thralls which are wove about the feminine sex are very impeding. Here's myself and my pardner Dora will have to forego the pleasure of an innocent and soul-exalting entertainment because we belong to that feebler sex which

costume has impelled to lean upon the arm of men for guidance and support. I suppose, if I were a little older and had a more matronly appearance, I might venture to take Dora and go together ; but as it is, nobody'd know which was sisserone and which wasn't. It would only

be a dollar for the two, if we didn't take reserved seats, which I'm sure I shouldn't care for. I'd rather "face the music," as Mr. Little observes so felishesly. I don't care so much for myself, neither, though *I'm very* fond of music, as you all know; but Dora, poor thing, has really set her heart upon going, though she hasn't been asked, and if she had, she says she wouldn't go and leave me in solitary refinement at home.

Did you inquire, Mr. Bethuen, if it was a sacred concert? No, not exactly. It couldn't be called a *sacred* concert, though I see in the diagram there's an extract from Hannibal's "Messiah;" but I presume it's all of a character opprobrious enough for a ministerial student to listen to. Good music has an elevating tendency, whether it's of a sectarian character or not. But I must not allow myself to dwell upon this theme any longer. *Won't* you have some more coffee, Mr. Grayson? I really wish you would! and a little more of the beefsteak; it's tender-line. I bespoke tender-line this morning, as I know beefsteak and coffee are strengthening and sustaining, and their uniting influence may enable an invalid like yourself to brave the evening air, provided you should happen to wish to go out this evening. Oh, yes, Mr. Little, certainly! help yourself freely. It ought to be good, for I paid a cent on a pound more than common for it.

Of course *you*'ll attend the concert, Mr. Barker? and you, Mr. White? You've both such musical overtures, yourselves, that you'll be able to depreciate all the excellencies of the occasion. But, as I said before, I must not allow myself to dwell on this theme any longer. Since I *can't* attend, the best way is to banish all thoughts of it from my mind. There, Dora, you needn't cry, if you *are* disappointed. You ain't a-crying! Well, you look as if you wanted to, and I'm sure I don't blame you. If you *should* cry, it wouldn't be on account of the concert as much as on account of some people's want of delicacy? Poor child! I don't wonder you feel some of the slights to which the orphan and the brotherless are exposed. If you had a brother now, he'd take some other girl, of course, if he was a sensible man, and allow *you* the privilege of escorting Miss Adams—what a witty person you ever are, Mr. Little. I'm glad Dora's invited; anyhow, that's one thing off my mind. My own disappointment I don't care about; though I doubt if Dora'll feel at liberty to accept *under the circumstances.* He! he! Mr. Little, I'm *much* obledged to you, I'm sure. I didn't expect an invitation. Nothing was further from my thoughts. In fact, I hadn't allowed myself to think much about it, as I had no idea of going. But since you're so polite, though I'm extremely reluctant to put

you to so much trouble and expense, of course we'll be very happy, Dora and myself—Dora in particular.

* * * * * * *

Oh, thank you, we had a delightful time—delightful. I'm very sorry you wasn't there, Mr. Grayson. All the aristocracy of Pennyville was present. You'd have had a fine chance to get a glimpse of our best society under the most favorable allspices. The ladies were mostly without their bonnets, and had their hair dressed as if they was at a party. It had quite a city air, I assure you. I could almost transport myself, in theory, to Boston, or some other great metropolan. Mr. Little obtained us splendid seats, where we could hear and be heard to the best advantage. I was in my elements; I don't know when I have had such a real good time. Madame Frizzolinda was dressed *beau*tifully, just as I've read of their being dressed at their oporating performances —white satin, with a train, and a crown on her head, and a great big bouquet on her bosom. She looked like an empress. And then her singing was such a treat! I enjoyed it so much I hadn't the heart to be as critical as I usually am. Her localization was superb; her denunciation was equally rapid and brilliant. She ran up and down the scale with the utmost agility. I've always thought *I* was pretty good

on the high notes, but she went up beyond me. Them Italian pieces she sung was so affecting; I could see it by the way she rolled up her eyes and gasped for breath, though, of course, as I don't understand Italian, I couldn't tell just what it was about. I wish you'd have heard her sing "The Messiah," Mr. Bethuen, though I am afraid you would have disapproved of the style of her dress. They say she's as much as forty years old, but she didn't look more than twenty last evening. I trust she does not paint, or powder, or try to make herself look more youthful than she is. Such things are very silly, to say nothing of their being sinful; don't you think so, Mr. Bethuen? If *I* was forty years old, I'd acknowledge it, and let it go at that. But, oh, Herr Blitzengruntz was *perfect*. He came on the platform with *such* an air, and his moustache was so foreign, and he looked about with such self-possession. When he began to play I trembled for our music-teacher's piano, though I suppose, if it had come to pieces, they would have paid the damages. You know I carried that sweet bouquet Mr. Barker gave me last week, and I was so glad I did! My feelings overcome me so by the time he'd played his first piece through that I was just able to toss it at his feet. We sat very near the platform, in a conspicuous position, and I feel quite certain

that he saw just who it proceeded from. I was so glad I wore my pink silk dress and my hair in natural curls, without any bonnet—not that I care for the vanities of dress, Mr. Bethuen, but, having long been a resident of Pennyville, I feel a natural pride in having it make a good impression on strangers. When he picked up the bouquet and looked over the audience I nodded slightly and smiled, and I think he observed it, for he held the flowers to his bosom with a very impressive manner. I'm sure he will not soon forget Pennyville, nor his reception by the fairer portion of its inhabitants. These Germans are so fascinating! To be sure, he was rather fat, if I may be allowed the term, and his face—what we could see of it—was rather red; but what he lacked in elegance he made up in dignity. He evidently felt his superiority, and he doubtless had good reasons. I, for one, felt ready to yield to all he should require. They're so used to being petted, it spoils them. It must be delightful to be spoiled. Ah, well, they left town this morning by the ten o'clock stage, and I suppose we shall hear them no more. Pleasure is so effervescent! Don't you find it so, Mr. Bethuen? You, whose mind is fixed on serial matters, must regard many of these things as vanities. What's that, Mr. Little? No wonder the pleasure Herr Blitzengruntz conferred was effervescent, con-

sidering what a barrel of beer he was? He! he! I suppose I must allow you to say all the funny things you want to, since you were so considerate as to take us to the concert, without the least intimacy upon our part, either, that we would like to go. It's very fortunate for Dora that she's with me. It enables her to receive attention she wouldn't get otherwise, and I'm glad of it, for her sake.

Step into my bodoor, Mr. Bethuen; you've not honored it yet by your presence. This is a llttle retreat, where I go to forget the cares and vexations of life, to fix my mind upon spiritual things, to banish the temperate affairs that must necessarily divert me through much of the day. It is a spot desecrated to devotion. Whenever you are weary of the strife of living, or pained by the noise and jokes of my other boarders, seek refuse in here; you will be ever welcome. Upon this little table reposes a Bible and hymn-book; here rests my guitar. It is not exactly a sacred instrument, but its strings shall never be profaned by any music which shall jar upon the sensitive chords of your nature. If Mr. Barker and Mr. White persist in singing "Old Uncle Ned," and other specimens of negro minstrelsy, they shall do it in the general parlor. Though I have not yet united with the church, Mr. Bethuen, you must not suppose that I am indifferent to religious

subjects. That I have taken you to board at a dollar a week less than my other boarders proves the deep interest I take, and the sacrifices I am ready to make, in the good cause. I think that if some *friend*—or some one even nearer and dearer than a friend—should make a personal effort in my behalf, I could be brought to take a more saving interest in religion than I have ever yet done. If I were united to some member of the church—united in good works, I mean, of course—doubtless I should come into the fold. It's probably been more from youthful thoughtlessness than anything else that I have not hitherto been more decidedly drawn toward the means of conversion. I've no doubt you'll exert a beneficial influence upon the young gentlemen of my family. I feel it a comfort and a privilege to have your countenance even at the low sum of three dollars a week. You must not mind the air of levity which at times prevails at my table and in my parlor; high spirits is natural to youth—I indulge in them myself sometimes—unless one feels early that they have a special call, as I suppose you do. Do you sing? We might have some sacred music occasionally. I lead in the choir, you know; I've always sang in the choir since I was a mere child. I haven't belonged to the sewing society lately, owing to some personal misunderstandings be-

tween myself and some of the ladies of Pennyville; but I don't feel so hard towards them as I did, I feel more of the forgiving spirit to "love my enemies," and I presume I shall join the circle again, perhaps at their next meeting. Do you attend? Then I shall certainly be there. Excuse me, Mr. Bethuen, but I noticed your collars was getting a little ragged around the edges. Anything I can do for you, you know, I shall consider the same as if I was serving the Lord in any other way. I feel anxious to be doing a little more good in the world. Some persons think they will put off seeking grace until their youth is past, and they are tired of the gayeties of the world; but I do not think I shall be one of those; I shall be thankful to have the way pointed out to me; I shall consider your advice and counsel valueless, and in return, any little sewing, you know, or service of that kind. Here's a couple of pocket-handkerchiefs I've hemmed for you. Oh, no! no! don't thank me; they were only three-and-sixpence a-piece, and I shall feel honored by having them dedicated to the use of oilyfactories of a future minister. Make yourself to home in my bodoor, Mr. Bethuen; I feel anxious to see a good deal of you. Must you go? To prayer-meeting, I suppose? If I had time I should accompany you; but there's a great many calls upon my attention. I occupy a

difficult position for a person of my years; but I may tell you, as a great secret, mind, Mr. Bethuen, *that I am making money*, and with money one can do a *great deal of good;* don't you think so?

CHAPTER VII.

SHE TAKES A LITTLE BOUND-GIRL TO LOVE AND CHERISH.

MERCY! what a crash! something's gone to smash in that kitchen now. Oh, dear, I've no peace of my life! I've had that bound-girl in the house a week, and it 'pears to me a centurion. Tired as I am, I must trod down and see what's gone, before she has a chance to hide the pieces.

What have you broke now, Caturah? Don't tell me you hain't broke nothing; I heard it as plain as day. Lord-a-mercy! If it isn't that soup-tureen that I paid eighteen shillings for only the other day. The boarders will go without soup now for one while, if it is cheap feeding. And how am I going to get the worth of it out of you, my little baggage? you've no wages to keep back, and you've nothing to detach. Pretty economy it was taking you in place of a good, stout, hired girl, and doing the heft of the work myself for the sake of having some good out of you some time, and you've destroyed more'n your head's worth the first week of your coming. How am I

going to get back my eighteen shillings, I say? I'll get it out of your back; yes, miss, I'll see what virtue there is in whips; and I'll half starve you to make it up. Oh! you needn't begin to whimper. You'll have something to

cry for before night, something that will make you wish you was back in the poor-house where you belong.

Go out in the garden and get me a couple of them peach sprouts, and come in and take off

your vandyke. Stop, I won't hear a word! don't try to interrupt me, you ill-mannered child. March, and be sure you get good, stout ones, or I'll go myself; go along, this instance!

Humph! rather slimsy sprouts; but they'll do, I guess. Now, miss, off with that vandyke.

What? Where? Oh, Mr. Grayson's dog did it, did he? A likely story! Humph! a dog breaking a soup-tureen. What's that? sneaked in before you knew it, and got his nose in it, and knocked it off the table? Hum! a likely story. But it *pays*, at all events—better'n whipping *you*, much as I ache to do it. If Mr. Grayson's dog broke the tureen, Mr. Grayson'll pay for it, of course. He's a gentleman, and always does what's right about money matters. I shall tell him just how it occurred, and charge it in his week's account. But mind, I don't believe you, not a word you speak, you naughty, deceitful child! Do you know what an awful thing it is to tell a lie? Did nobody ever read to you the story out of the Bible about Annannias and Sophia? how they were struck dead upon the spot for telling a lie—a terrible, wicked lie? Ain't you afraid the same thing will happen to you for your——

Good gracious! Mr. Little, how you do surprise a person! What's brought you down here into the mediterranean portion of my abode? Oh, no, not in the least! you haven't

decomposed me at all, and you needn't feel under the necessity of apologizing. *Some* boarding-houses might not want their boarders to appear unsuspectedly in their kitchens, but I'm not one of that sort. If I have a fault, which the most of us have, more or less, it's in being too superciliously neat. Caturah, look if there's any hot water to spare in the boiler. Yes, Mr. Little, you can have all you like. What was I doing with them peach-sprouts? Oh, you funny man! what do you *suppose* I was doing with them? nothing, as yet. But the cats is awful troublesome about here; they'll filbert the very chickens off the gridiron if they aren't watched; and I've just been telling Caturah to keep these sprouts handy, and the next time she catches 'em at any of their snooping, jest to administer a good, smart categation to them. You didn't know but, perhaps, as I'd never had any babies of my own to spank, I was going to try my hand on little Caturah here! He! he! you'll be the death of me yet, with all your jokes, Mr. Little. I trust you don't mean that for a double intender. I'm very particular; I don't make it a practice to joke with my gentlemen boarders; for a young lady in my situation, you know, has to exercise a great deal of circumspection. But you're *so* overpowering, Mr. Little, I always *have* to smile at you.

You're glad to hear it's only the cats. Of

course it's the cats, and that dog of Mr. Grayson's that's just broken my soup-tureen. Caturah will get along well enough if she only does as well as she knows how. She's a poor, deserted orphan, without father or mother, that I've took from the poor-house from motives of charity alone. I've always been renounced for my charitable disposition; and I know of no way I could do a better deed than to take this poor thing to bring up, and rear as if she was my own. I'm young for such a responsibility, but I shall discharge it to the best of my ability. I can't discharge this one as easy as I did Bridget, seeing she's bound to me by ties stronger than those of blood. He! he! what an inveterate punster you are! Go right straight along out of this kitchen, or I shan't get my work done this afternoon. You needn't think of getting up a frolic with us girls. Dora's gone out; and I'm not to be pampered with. If you should try to put your arm around my waist, I should powder that curly head of yours with the flour-dredger. Caturah, run out and empty these scraps into the pig-pen, and pick up some chips as you come along back. No, indeed, sir; none of your frolicking down here. What! going? The water's getting cold? It can be resuscitated with a little more if it's too cool. Don't be in a hurry. Oh, well, go, if you must. But I guess if Dora was present

you wouldn't be so pressed for time. Howsomever, I guess Mr. Bethuen don't feel bad to see which way the wind blows. He's a very agreeable young man, in my opinion; so intellectual and so moral in all his faculties. A little silent and retiring, but most great men are said to be. He's pious, if ever a young man was. Hey?—especially when it's pumpkin-pie? Oh, Mr. Little! you're *too* bad; he's considerable of an eater I am aware; and he don't pay much for his board—but he needs physical food to sustain his great spirituous efforts. If he wasn't *quite* so humble, I believe I'd encourage his atten——

Dear me! He's gone, hot water and all. Well, I hope I made him a little jealous, anyhow. Caturah! Caturah! what are you so long about those chips for, you idle little good-for-nothing?

Don't you presume to interfere, Dora Adams! She hasn't been whipped half enough yet, and I'm bound to have satisfaction out of her. There isn't any of the boarders around now, and I'm going to give her enough to last her. Yell away as loud as you please, you little catamount you! there's nobody to hear you, and go about telling of it to the neighbors. I've held in just as long as I can, and I'm not going to stop now. What has she done? She's done everything! Hasn't Mr. Grayson gone and

taken board at the hotel? and isn't that corned beef that I bought a-spoiling in the barrel? and didn't I forget myself, and come to dinner to-day with only one of my pads in my dress, and the boarders a-tittering, and the potatoes boiled to pieces because I was so put out and flustrated with only this plaguey little thing to help me, doing everything wrong, and hurrying me so that I had no time to tend to the most conspicuous portion of my toilet? What has she done, indeed? If you was in the kitchen a little more you wouldn't have to ask. A-curling your hair on your neck, and sweeping and dusting with gloves on for fear of spoiling your pretty hands, and I a-slaving in the kitchen to support you. Do you dare—do you dare to walk up dilapidately and take my whip out of my hands and break it up before my face and eyes? You think she's been punished enough, do you? You don't want people thinking and saying that I'm cruel and unjust to the orphan, for *my* sake? Oh, you're extremely considerate; but who's going to know it, if you don't tell of it yourself, and we the only souls about the house? Mr. Bethuen is reading in his room right overhead? Why didn't you tell me *that* in the first place? She's deserved all she's got, and more too; but, of course, I should have taken a more suitable time to administer cor-

rection, if I'd have dreamed I was interrupting the studies of one of my boarders.

Quit that snivelling, Caturah, this instance; don't you know you're interrupting a minister of the gospel that's going to be? and put your cape on your shoulders, and take this three-cent piece and go to the grocery and buy yourself some gingerbread, since you haven't had any dinner. If anybody asks you what you've been crying about, you can let on as if you fell down and hurt you. Don't you *dare* to tell 'em any other story, if you know what's best for yourself. Ain't hungry, hey? Well, I guess you'll come to your appetite soon enough. You needn't think because I've allowed Miss Adams to have her way this time that it's going to do you any good to be sulky. Dora, do you go up and ask Mr. Bethuen if he knows what's good for a burn. I don't expect you to *say* that Caturah has scalded herself, but it won't harm your conscience to intimidate as much, if it comes handy.

If the dishes are washed, and the floor swept, you can take your spelling-book and sit down till it's time to put on the tea-kettle, Caturah. You shan't have it to say that you're overworked. And be sure and call me down at five o'clock.

Dear! dear! I hope I shan't feel quite so irritable after I've laid down awhile and got

rested. I *did* whip her rather hard, I must confess; but I was awfully out of temper about that padding, and Mr. Grayson's leaving. He was one of my best boarders, and I *did* have faint hopes of—hi! ho! chances are getting fewer and fewer all the time; and to think of that impudent fellow asking me at the table if I wasn't getting to be a little one-sided in my views of matters and things, and I never knew what he meant till I looked in the glass afterward. It was enough to vex a saint. I didn't think Dora had spunk enough to walk up, as she did this afternoon, and take that stick out of my hands and snap it in two. Such a timid thing, afraid to say her soul's her own, and put upon by me as much as she is, I didn't suppose would have the courage to interfere. My! her eyes blazed like stars, and all for that little beggar. I see I must use more circumspection. I hope Mr. Bethuen was so emerged in study that he didn't hear what was going on. I guess I'll call Dora and tell her she may go to Mr. Little's store and select that blue Thibet this afternoon. It won't do to go too far.

CHAPTER VIII.

SHE CASTS HER BREAD UPON THE WATERS.

THINGS are in excellent trim, and I trust that, for once, the fates will smile upon my prospects. I've had so much vanity and vexation of spirit lately, that I don't feel as if I could put up with much more without giving up, once for all. I'm getting as yellow as an old Leghorn, and I'll have to hang myself in a bleach barrel, and press myself out, if I keep on wrinkling up the way I have lately. But it won't do to talk about brimstun when there's ministers expected. It's time he was here now, and there is nobody in hearing to prevent my singing it as soon as I hear him come into the parlor. I'm going to strike up, as if entirely unaware of his proximity, the instance I detect his footsteps in the parlor; he'll pause to listen; of course he'll not interrupt me till I'm through, and being supposed to never dream of his presence, will render the effect much more powerful. If he's as green as I think he is, it will be just the thing. I've set it to the tune of "Greenland's Icy Mountains," which is his peculiar favorite, and my guitar accompanies it beautifully.

Hark! that's the hall-door; he's coming in, and now's the moment. "Strike while the iron is hot." Hum!

(*Sings.*)

"From Pennyville to Boston,
Which ocean breezes fan,
You will not come acrost one
That equals this young man.
He points the road to ruin,
A burning, shining light—
His name is T. Bethuen,
Or Timothy, by right.

"The world's deceitful pleasures,
They have no charms for him.
He's laying up his treasures
Where moths cannot get in.
His grace it is amazing
In one so very young;
The Lord he's ever praising
With sweetness on his tongue.

"That heathen in the Ganges
Their little children throw,
His mind it near deranges
To think it must be so;
He shows so much devotion
It would not me surprise
If o'er the raging ocean
To rescue them he flies.

"Oh, how can helpless wimmin
Support this noble youth?
There's one whose name is Slimmens
Would fly with him in truth.

She'd give a million dollars
For his aspiring wings—
She stitches all his collars
And shirts and other things.

"She's proud to be permitted
To do her mite in this;
Perhaps the socks she's knitted
May lead the path to bliss!
'Her bread upon the waters'
She casts from 'pole to pole'—
Oh, that earth's sinful daughters
Would think about their soul!

"Instead of paints and ringlets
And fleeting female charms,
Would sigh for angels' winglets
And saints' protecting arms!
Oh, had I T. Bethuen
To ever point the way,
I'd shun the road to ruin,
And join the church to-day—y—y!"

For the land sake! Mr. Little! where did you come from? I thought as much as could be that it was Mr.—in fact, I hadn't the least idea there was a living creetur nigh. I've just been singing "Greenland's Icy Mountains" to keep up my choir-practice a little. Did you hear me? Well, the words *were* a little different in some parts. I found 'em here on the table in pencil-mark. I guess Dora must have composed 'em; she seems to be dreadful fond of that stiff-looking, mumble-mouthed youngster. I shouldn't be surprised if it made a

match. A pretty couple they'll be to begin the world—neither of them a penny. I suppose he'll preach, and she'll bleach, and the Lord will take care of them. And, really, I don't suppose Dora'll ever do any better. A destitute orphan like her don't commonly have too many chances to throw away. I shall give her a bed, and a set of dishes, and some pretty good clothes for her wedding-outfit if I find out she's really engaged.

La, Mr. Little! how close you do set! Suppose some prying eyes should see into this bodoor, with you a-setting so close to my side and trying to take my hand! The tonsorial world would immejetly say that if we wasn't engaged, we ought to be. But you needn't stir upon that account. Don't move—don't! Alvira Slimmens has a soul that scorns the voice of scandal; besides, there isn't a living creature about to see or hear or tell tales. You might get your arm about my waist in spite of all I could do, and there'd be nobody to fly to my rescue. You're glad of it, for you've got something very particular to tell me? Oh, Mr. Little, don't say it *too* unexpectedly, or you'll flustrate me so that I shan't know what answer to make you. Of course I shall give my consent; but I don't want to do it without a little reflection. Though I've long anticipated this moment, yet now it is here, I'm so—so happy

—so delirium with emotion—dearest, may my head repose a moment upon your shoulder while I try to recover my perceptive facilities?

You are pleased to inform me that Mr. Bethuen is *not* the only chance for dear little Dora to be settled in life? She's confessed to you that she returned your love—she! I didn't think she'd have the immodesty—and you've thought it proper to announce the engagement to me, as her friend and guardian, and to say that you'd like the wedding to come off New Year's day if *I* think proper! Well, I *must* say, that's rather hurrying up matters, for two children like you. Three weeks' engagement! If *I* promised to marry one of the masculine sex, I'd impel him to wait three years instead of three weeks. Dora *did* object; but you was afraid she was overworking herself, and thought she might as well take you first as last, as you never expected to be *worthy* of her anyhow. You are a dreadful modest young man, Mr. Little, for a dry-goods merchant, and the best looking person in Pennyville. You knew Dora would jump at the chance; anybody would. But I don't like your hinting about her being overworked. I've done a good part by that girl, and I don't bear her no ill-will now. If you and she are a mind to get married, and will promise to board with me the first year, and take that front room and bedroom at

twelve dollars a week, why, as I can't help it, I shall give my consent, and do all I can to help Dora about her sewing, and countenance the match by giving her a good wedding—and that's the end of it. Of course you'll pay all the expenses, and see that she is provided with all she wants? Well, just as you please about that. I've no doubt you're better able than a poor boarding-house female to do what's handsome, and if you want to give a party, or anything, I'm willing to take the trouble of the arrangements. I've ever regarded you as an elder sister might a brother, and I trust you'll feel free to do as you please. Dora bade you say how grateful she felt for all my kindness, and that she hoped still to remain with me, if it was as a boarder instead of a pardner! She's a good little thing as ever lived—Dora is—and I don t find fault with her, if she has deserted me rather unexpectedly. I wish you both well. Going to tell her the result of our interview? Go along, then, and don't be silly!

There, snap went *that* string to my bow! There's only one left now, which is the crookedest stick of all. I might as well abandon everything else, and do what I can to enamel Mr. Bethuen. Mr. Grayson's gone, and Mr. Barker I've recently heard was engaged to Philista Podd, where he spends so much of his evenings; and now Mr. Little has the audacity

to come and tell me that he is going to marry Dora. I've seen it—I've seen it, these weeks and weeks, that they were in love with each other, but I trusted *some* chance would break it up. Poor Dora! I suppose I ought to be glad, on her account, but I *can't!*—it's more than human nature is culpable of, to rejoice in her good luck. I never thought *she'd* make the best match in Pennyville! it all comes of her curls, and pink cheeks, and innocent baby looks. Heigh-ho! There's one consolation: they'll pay a good price for their board, and will be good company. I'd better put on a smiling face and make the best of it, in a pecuniary point of view, that's all.

I wonder what kept Timothy Bethuen from coming in this evening, as he promised. If anything's wrong *there*, I'll give up and done with it. I'm glad that nobody but Mr. Little heard me singing them verses. He won't dare to make fun of me now, since he's an object for keeping me in good humor. Besides, he'll likely forget all about it, his mind was so full of another matter. I was completely taken aback, when I saw it was him. The first of January! heigh-ho! Didn't I say I'd give all I was worth to stand in Dora Adams's old shoes?

CHAPTER IX.

THE PROFESSOR AT THE TEA-TABLE.

DO you know what I've made up my mind to do, Dora? It's to give you my wedding-dress. It's just as nice as the minute it went into that trunk. Nobody's ever seen it but you and me, and it can be fitted over for you beautifully. You remember I paid three dollars and a half a yard for that dress; it's real brocade, and shines like silver. Oh, you needn't object to accepting it! I can't bear the sight of it; and it's just yellowing and creasing up, lying away as it does. I never expect to need it now. If I marry, as I likely shall *some time*, it will not be to one who will wish to see me covered with the fineries and artificials of this world. A plain drab, or, at most, an ashes of roses, will be more suitable to my new spear. The wife of a minister must not be a stumbling-block in the way of her husband, exposing herself to the remarks and distractions of the congregation. I shall dress very plain after I'm married; I've been thinking I should give up curls; but I'm not quite settled as to whether I shall or not. Oh, no! it

ain't a bit too good for a person in your circumstances; you're to be the bride of a dry-goods merchant, and must confirm to *his* position. That, and the silk he gave you, and your new Thibet for common occasions, will make a very pretty tournure.

Go up to that closet and unlock the trunk—here's the key—and take the dress out and bring it in here. Let's try it on and baste it over at once. You've no time to spare between this and New Year's; and bring along the camfire bottle off my bureau; I *may* have to have resource to it when I gaze once more upon my bridal robe. That man was an awful villain, a scoundrel of the deepest dye. I hope to hear before I quit this lunatory spear that he's met his death by hanging. He gave Mehitable Green the greatest triumph of her existence. She can't pass me to this day but she looks as if she wanted to put her thumb to her nose and wiggle her fingers. If she didn't deem it vulgar I haven't the least doubt she'd do it.

It's a little broad across the shoulders, and long in the skirt, but that's better than being too small. My fingers tremble so I can hardly baste it up; I don't know what's the matter; but I expect that bound-girl's wearing on my nerves. Of course it's not fond memories of the past. I'm not so sentimental as I was be-

fore I came into this boarding-house. I think there's something about cooking vittals less congealing with sentiment than trimming bunnits. Besides, recently, I've had my attention called to topics of more serious consideration than the romantic dreams of thoughtless girlhood. After you're married, Dora, and the fuss is over, and I've time to reflect upon it, I do not know but I shall join the church.

There's a ring loud enough to start up that stupid Caturah, I hope. Eh? gentleman in the parlor wants to see the mistress of the house. A stranger? Another boarder, may be. Is my hair all right, Dora? I like to forgot that I washed my face since I came up. Hand me that pink saucer a minute. You go on with your basting while I go down and see what he wants.

Good-afternoon, sir. A remarkably fine day for this season of the year, sir. Yes, sir; I am the proprietor of this establishment, or the proprietoress I suppose I ought to say—he! he!—sir. The feminine portion of the community so seldom appear in a business capacity that I sometimes shrink from the responsibility of appearing as the head of so extensive and flourishing an establishment, especially as I am placed in an unprotected situation, without father or brother, and feel myself young to assume so much, but must say, if I *do* say it

myself, that I have generally given as much satisfaction as

> "Those that are older than me—
> Of many far wiser than me—"

as dear dead Poe has it in his touching and

graphical poem. But perhaps you are not fond of the Muses, and I will not seek to infuse my taste for them into the bosom of another.

Well, really, sir, I do not know, until I allow my memory to summon up and ascertain. A

good, sizable room, with a fire? I'm *very* much crowded at present, I may say; am reluctantly impelled to refuse applications every day, so general a favorite has my house become. However, I will see. Did I understand you that you were a *single* gentleman? The reason of my making what may seem a peculiar inquiry, is that I do not accommodate families. If you wished a room for *yourself*, I might try, even if prompted to resign my own apartment for a season, until a vacation occurs. Ah! indeed, a widower, without children? May I ask how long you have been afflicted? Only three years. I thought I perceived the traces of some settled melancholy still upon your features. I have been—I know not whether fortunately for myself or otherwise—gifted with sympathetic facilities which ever enable me to detect and console another's sorrows. So that, really, I can hardly be said, in the common acceptation of the term, to take boarders. It is more as if I were surrounded by a family of brothers. Of course, worldly prudence dictates to me to accept a merely nominal sum in return for the food and drink which I bestow; but food and drink for the body is not *all*, sir; and I make no charge for that sisterly counsel and nursing care which is invaluable. There is something in your countenance which interests me. I shall *endeavor* to furnish you such a

room as you desire. If you have a chamber entirely to yourself, with a stiddy fire, and lights, my terms will be six dollars and a half a week, payable weekly. Doubtless you can obtain a room at the hotel for six dollars; but not a *home*. The paltry consideration of fifty cents a week is but small return for a *home* to him who stands in need of such. Doubtless you yourself feel this. Did you say what your business was?—excuse me, but I have forgotten—and how long your stay in Pennyville will probably be?

A professor of spiritus-phycology? Dear me! you don't say so! I've ever had a taste of phrenology, fizzleology, and all the kindred sciences. Your stay will depend upon your success as a lecturer, and the number of pupils you obtain? Then, no doubt, you will remain the winter with us. The people of Pennyville are noted for their patternage of lecturers and men of intellectibility. I myself am but *e pluribus unum*, as our national emblem has it; I am one of many who represent the brain of this community. Allow me, in their name, to welcome you to our vicinity. You will not regret it, nor the price you will pay for board in my household. I have a number of young gentlemen in my family, and I shall endeavor to induce them all to attend your course of lectures, and become your pupils. When did you say I

might expect you? You would like your room to be in readiness by tea-time, if possible? I will make the effort, sir. I feel in serving you that I am serving the cause of spiritus-phycology. *Good*-afternoon, until we meet again, "around the festal board," as Byron has it.

A new boarder, Dora! I've ordered a fire and clean sheets in Mr. Grayson's room; which I'm glad now, all things considered. he give up just as he did. He was such a cold, observing person, I was always afraid of him; and the new boarder pays fifty cents a week more, and is *so* interesting. He wears specs, and a white cravat, and has a high forrid, and a low voice, and is a widower, not over thirty years of age, and a *professor*. Professor of what? Why, of spiritus-physiology, or some such beautiful thing, I don't precisely remember what. But his hair is as black as jet, and he has such a sweet, solemn kind of a smile, he interested my feelings at once. I hope he'll get a good class, so as to remain here as long as possible. I suppose he'll be only a transitory boarder, but "great oaks from little acorns grow," and who can tell what may arise from his pausing in Pennyville, and selecting this as his stopping-place?

Come to think, I believe I'd rather buy you a new dress out and out, and let this be just as it is for the present. There's a very nice piece

of white satin at Parker's, which would be just the thing, and this brocade is rather heavy for you. Oh, you've cut into it, have you? Well, never mind; only I thought that what might be opprobious to a minister's wife might not be to a professor's. It was merely a fancy that occurred to— Go ahead, now you've began, and make it as pretty as you can.

Gentlemen, allow me to introduce to you Professor Lankton, who has come among us for the interesting purpose of making our citizens familiar with the elevating and instructive science of spirituo-phycology. Professor Lankton, allow me to introduce to you *my family*, as I take pleasure in terming it.

"We're a band of brothers,"

that is, all but myself and Dora, who are the sister spirits who minister to the wants of this interesting group. I feel that there will be a congeniality of sentiments between you. The advent of a person into our midst of the character of this stranger cannot but have an elevating influence upon our citizens. I have promised him that Pennyville shall give him a glowing welcome, and I believe that my own family will not be behindhand in extending its patronage to profound learning mingled with the modest timidity of real genius. I speak a word for this

gentleman, who is now for the first time seated at this board. He "was a stranger, and I took him in." Let him not discover to his sorrow that I have given too arduous encouragement. Mr. Smith, I believe you have the renting of our Town Hall—give it to him for as moderate a compensation as you can in justice to yourself. I, myself, have taken a season ticket for the first course of his lectures, and hope all those I see gathered around me will follow my example. If an unprotected female can afford to encourage the arts and finances, I am sure her brothers will not hesitate to follow in her footsteps. But, really, in my ardor, I had forgotten your tea, gentlemen. I will pour it now.

Better late than never, if it is a little cold. Tea? Of course it's tea—the best of young hyson. Oh, you couldn't decide what particular style of beverage it was expected to be regarded? Perhaps, if you smoked a few less cigars, Mr. Porter, your taste would be more detective. What's that? Tarts? No, I haven't any tarts for tea, as I know of. I suppose you are *trying* to be funny at my expense. And I am trying to be saving at yours? He's only in jest, professor. My family are ever in such good spirits—all life and emenation.

CHAPTER X.

THE DOUBLE WEDDING—MARRIED AT LAST:

WHO'D have thought it! Who *would* have thought it, Dora, that you and I should both be married upon the same day? Four weeks ago you were not even engaged—four days ago I wasn't: and here we are actually dressing for the wedding! No mistake *this* time. The bridegrooms are in the house—in their own rooms, getting ready. If it wasn't that they were so near, and we had such circumstantial evidence of the truth of what's going to happen, I should hardly durst to credit my own sensations. The fact is, I never have quite recovered from that shock—you know to what I allude—and I sometimes feel as if I was in a dream, especially as the time draws nigh, and the same sensations begin to agitate me as on that fatal night.

You look heavenly, Dora, with your bridal-veil, and curls, and that white silk. I wish I was half as handsome! I can afford to own it, now that we're both sure of a husband, though I never did consider myself as fair complected as you. How tasty it was of Mr. Little to send

to Lowell for them exquisite bouquets, one for each of us. He's a fine man, and I wish you good luck of him. Just pin my veil here, with this pearl pin, won't you? Why, child, how cold your hands are, and you're actually trembling! Well, I'll confess, I'm a good deal flustrated, but I don't feel so agitated as all that. You're as pale as a ghost. Was that Mr. Little speaking in the hall? Bless me, if you ain't as red as a piny the minute you hear his voice! Set down and compose yourself. I'm afraid we shall make some blunder, if you don't get a little composed, and I want things to go off in style this time. I want my revenge, this night, upon that old Mehitable Green, that's made me a laughing-stock for the last two years. I've included her in the invitations a-purpose to enjoy her rage; she'll be so mad she'll be fairly green, and yet she'll have to smile as sweet as a pitcher of molasses when she wishes me joy. There's the men talking in the hall. No mistake *this* time, Dora.

You see, there's something in presentiments; never tell me again you don't believe in 'em. Why, that Professor hadn't been in the house more'n twenty minutes—I had just had a little business conversation with him—and he'd gone back to the tavern to order his baggage over; and didn't I walk right up to this very room, and tell you you needn't cut into that bridal-

robe, the very one you're wearing this instance, for, like as not, I should want it myself? Lucky for you I was too late, and I can't say I'm sorry, for maybe it would have been an ill omen for me to have put that on again. I only hope it will bring you better fortune than it did me.

I've learnt wisdom from experience. The Professor endeavored to persuade me to lend him a couple of hundred beforehand, but I wasn't to be fooled twice. "Never," said I, "until I am thine, and thine alone, shall I resign a penny of my money—not that I doubt thee, dearest, but I've reasons which I care not to explain." And though his brow was clouded for a moment, it cleared away, and he assured me that it was no longer of any consequence, only—and he looked so reproachfully that I almost blamed my own severity—only he thought I should have sufficient confidence in my future husband to make him a trifling loan for a few days. I came very near doing it, but I didn't. I determined to have *him* first, and have him I shall in less than two hours.

Only to think of my being the bride of a real professor! I never expected to aspire to such an imminence. Mrs. Professor Lankton! me, Alvira Slimmens! Well, let them laugh that win; I've been a good while about it, but I haven't taken up with a crooked stick, for all

that. Poor Timothy Bethuen! I trust he isn't deeply disappointed; he's been wonderfully down in the mouth recently. What are you smiling at, Dora? He wasn't in love with *you*, was he? You needn't be afraid to confess, for nothing can now affect me unpleasantly.

There! the company has begun to arrive; I hear them crowding into the hall. And that's the minister. Bless us, child, don't tremble so; you'll disarrange your tournure. It's quite economical, making the same minister, and the same wedding-cake, and the same fuss and trouble answer for both. That's my *only* reason for having my own marriage take place so soon; otherwise I should have postponed it until I had time to become more intimately acquainted with my future husband—not that I consider it a necessary caution, for a meeker or more saintly-looking man I never saw than the professor; his face is the convex of his character.

Hark! hear that Mehitable laughing and talking; it's all put on, every bit of it, to hide her jealousy. You might know that she'd be among the first to get here; I expect the day has seemed awful long to her. I've taken particular pains to ask everybody that has been spiteful in their remarks; the parlor, and bodoor, and dining-room will be crammed and jammed with people. I'm glad Mr. Little's

sisters offered to receive the company: we'll have a chance to make so much better an impression, going down at the last, and sweeping in, and the minister proceeding with the ceremony immejitly. They're sweet girls, them new sisters of yours; they looked nice in them flounced tarlatans to-night. Only think! do you remember, Dora, when we were dressed once before upon a similar occasion? But you were not quite so flustrated then as this time. O my! my heart is vascillating like a pendulum. Don't you hear it? *No mistake this time;* and it hasn't cost me any great outlay either, only I've promised to pay the parson, owing exclusively to the Professor's not receiving expected remittances, which was the cause of his wishing me to loan him money.

There they come, tapping at the door—*our husbands*, Dora. Do tell me if everything is right—quick? my padding? my powder? my veil? Law! I don't believe you see a thing, for all you stare at me so! Be more composed, you little goose, or you'll never get through the ceremony with the eclat which I desire to produce. Now, shall I unclose the door? He! he! dearest, yes, we're quite ready. How do we look, Mr, Little? How do we look, Professor? Don't we make ruther a pretty pair of brides? Be sure, now, you don't mar the effect by any mistakes. Oh, *I* know the ceremony

from beginning to end! I've made it a study for the last few—years? he! he! Mr. Little, I believe you'd have your joke if you was going to the gallows. Has the minister come? I feel so queer, Professor, and yet this is the happiest moment of my existence. Do I lean too heavily upon your arm? I am so agitated I know not what I do. Come, Dora and Mr. Little; I suppose, as we are a trifle the eldest, we will proceed you. Now, all right (in a low voice); no mistake *this* time.

Thank you, Mrs. Wheeler. Thank you, Mr. Wheeler. He! he! Do you really intend to salute the brides? I suppose it will be useless to resist. Thank you, Mr. Stebbins, I hope I shall, Mrs. Stebbins. Miss Podd, Mr. Bethuen—he! he!—thank you. Miss Green, *thank* you; I *really* trust—— What's that?

Put her out! put out that vile intruder, I say! Who dared to admit a strange woman into these apartments at this time? Why don't some of you men take her by the arm and push her out into the street, where she belongs? *You* the wife of my husband? You look like it, don't you?—ha! ha! His first and only lawful wife? I should like to know who was his lawful wife, if I wasn't; it isn't more than five minutes since the ceremony has been legally performed. And you dare to stand there, and—and—Professor Lankton, why don't you stamp upon that brazen

creature? Why don't you deny her infamous story? Haven't you the spunk of a man? Then I'll at her myself.

I'll tear your bonnet off your head, and scratch your eyes out, if you don't quit my house this minute—this minute, I say! Oh! you needn't fire up so, you little, pale, sickly thing you; I could shake your breath out of you, if I wanted to; but I won't demean myself. No, I won't demean myself; you can't provoke me to. This is my bridal eve, and I'm not going to do anything unladylike or improper.

It's well for *me* that you arrived in this village as soon as you did? Is it?—ha! ha! You've got your marriage certificate in your pocket, and six living witnesses, in the shape of six of the Professor's children, at the hotel, besides? You can have him arrested for bigamy, can you? It isn't the first time you've caught him at his tricks? Famous for swindling deluded females out of their money? Makes his living out of his successes with women? Left you and the babies penniless? A nice story, and I suppose you expect me to believe it? Why don't you confront her, Professor?

Professor Lankton—why, where has he gone to? Sneaking out, with your hat under your arm, are you, sir? Ha! ha! ha! *don't* you wish you had that two hundred dollars you tried to borrow? Got caught this time? Any officers

at the door? Poor man! how scared he looks! —ha! ha! ha! I wish you joy of your wife and six young ones. Mrs. Professor Lankton, I wish you joy of this saintly being. Allow me to congratulate you upon your recovery. May your tender endearments console him for the loss of Alvira Slimmens and her little fortune! Spirituo-phycology is a very elevating science. *Good*-night, Professor; give my regards to your interesting little family.

Ha! ha! ha! have you shut the door on 'em, Mr. Little? A nice joke on the Professor, wasn't it? I shall never forget how frightened he looked; I guess he's afraid of her nails, if she *is* little. Ha! ha! ha! he! he! he! I can't help laughing to think of it; it's quite an adventure—good enough to put in the papers. Perhaps Mr. Little has got another wife somewhere, Dora; you can't trust the male sex, you know. But we'll eat the wedding-cake, ladies and gentlemen. Oh, yes, we won't be cheated out of the wedding-supper. Supposing you give us some music, Mr. Barker; music's very composing. Sing—sing—"This world is all a fleeting show"? Oh, Mr. Little, you're *so* funny; you are, really—he! he!

Mehitable Green, what are you grinning at? Do you see anything particularly amusing, allow me to inquire? That woman will drive me distracted yet. Go home! get out of my house, I

say; you shan't have one speck or morsel of the wedding-feast. You tormented me for years; how dare you laugh at me! There! see if you will start now! Oh, Dora, I beg your pardon; I didn't mean to have anything unpleasant take place on *your* bridal eve. I could have put up with my own disappointment, for I didn't set much store by that villain, anyhow; but that grinning, envious, ugly, malicious *old maid* threw me entirely off my guard. Stop crying, child, and laughing, too. I feel better since I pulled her wig off; and I'll go now, and see if the coffee is steeping.

CHAPTER XI.

SHE GOES TO MARKET—DOMESTIC ECONOMY.

TEN o'clock. Susan, fly around with that ironing. You don't get on at all. You and Caturah together don't do as much as one girl ought to. Caturah, get on your bonnet, and bring the market-basket, and come along after me. I'm going to market, and we'll have to be in a hurry about it if we get anything in time for dinner. It's the best hour for going to market; all the choice things are taken, and, of course, I have to put up with the cheap pieces, whether I want to or not. You won't catch me giving my boarders sirloin roasts and porter-house steaks; it isn't what I keep boarders for. Hurry up, young one, with that basket.

Good-morning, Mr. Betts. What's the price of table-butter to-day? Thirty-five cents! humph! you must think we boarding-house keepers are made of gold. Give me some of your twenty-seven cent butter; I shan't take any other till it gets cheaper. Celery, hey? how much a bunch? Fifteen cents! haven't you any that's partly stale, that you'd sell for less? Wilted celery is good enough for boarders; and

mine haven't had any for so long they won't know the difference. It'll be a treat, if it *is* tough. Here's a lot I'm sure you couldn't dispose of to anybody else; I'll give you ten cents for it. Here, Caturah, take care of that celery; and mind you don't eat any on the sly.

Yes, I *am* a little late this morning. Couldn't get off any earlier. All your best pieces gone? Sorry. Thought I'd have a roast to-day, but, since I can't have the sirloin, I won't have any. That neck piece will make a very good stew, with dumplings and potatoes. Potatoes are dreadful high. I'll have more dumplings than anything else, and that'll make a dish they can fill up on. I suppose I must get a little something besides, as some of my family won't eat stew any longer. No, no! I don't want any mutton-chops. What are fowls to-day? Oh, my! I can't think of fowls, at that price. I should sink money, to give my boarders fowls. Pshaw! you aren't in earnest, asking ten cents a pound for leg of mutton. I'll tell you what I *will* take—a pound or two of that salt pork, just enough to season a basin of beans. Pork and beans are hearty, and cheaper than potatoes at a dollar a bushel. No, I don't want any cabbage; I've celery for to-day; it's extravagant, I know, but I don't mind it once in a while; folks must be kept in good humor, when they get to grumbling too hard.

Eggs? No, indeed. Don't go to poking eggs at me, for a month yet. Eggs in February! Why, you're crazy. Come to think, though, I'll take a quarter of a dozen. One of my boarders is sick, and he asked, this morning, if he couldn't have a dropped egg on a bit of toast. Three cents apiece, eh? Well, well, I shall charge him ten cents a-piece for 'em cooked. No business to be sick and make trouble, if he doesn't expect to pay for it. Come along, Caturah. What keeps you lagging behind so? It's heavy, is it? not so heavy as it will be when these turnips are added.

Well, I believe we're through for to-day. Hurry up, child; that stew will be as tough as old Mehitable Green's flesh, if it doesn't get into the pot before long. I declare, I'm all out of breath—I don't believe my breath holds out the way it used to—and this rheumatiz in my ankle is anything but agreeable. There's Mr. Barker coming along the street. I'm going to pull my veil down; this cold weather wrinkles me up so; I know I look as old as Methusalah when I'm out in the wind. The town clock's striking eleven, and we're just home. It's nothing but fret and stew from morning till night, and no chance of its ever being otherwise, as I see, since that scrape with that professor.

Here, Susan, get this meat over, this minute, and them beans; they've only two hours to do

in. Don't wait to finish anything. I declare, I believe you've ironed more'n six pieces since I went out. Caturah, take hold, and smooth them towels and napkins. Don't stand there with your hand on your side, making believe that basket was so dreadful heavy. Children out of the poor-house must expect to work, they're none too good; everybody wasn't born with a silver spoon in their mouth.

For my part, I must trot up-stairs and see that sick man; but I've this comfort—I charge him fifty cents every trip I make. I shouldn't want any better business than boarding sick folks. In the first place, I charge 'em regular price for board, and, as they don't eat anything, that's pretty much all clear gain. In the next place, what they *do* eat is all extra, and I charge an extra price for *that*. Next, every time the help goes up to see if there's anything wanted, it's a quarter of a dollar; and when *I* go to inquire how they're getting along, why, it's like the friend that calls at the doctor's office, it's fifty cents for a consultation. That man's bill was eleven dollars last week, and it'll be full as much this; and all he eat, put together, wouldn't keep a robin alive—a bit of dry toast and a cup of tea once or twice a day.

Well, Mr. Smith, how do you find yourself to-day? A little better, hey? I'm rejoiced to hear it from the bottom of my heart; for, if

there's anything that's truly touching to the feelings, it is to see a fellow-creature suffering, especially when they're far from friends and home, though I trust this house will not seem altogether unlike home to you. I strive to make my family feel to home—especially the sick. Any appetite to-day? If there's any little delicacy which you crave, you shall have it, if it's to be found in Pennyville. I succeeded, after trying a long time, this morning, in procuring you some fresh eggs; they were awful high, but I didn't mind that. I am glad to hear you feel as if you could partake of a little sustenance to-day; it's a favorable symptom that you'll now be adolescent. Though you must be *very* careful not to eat too much; that's the great danger, after a run of fever. I shouldn't be doing the part of a sister by you if I didn't warn you not to indulge your appetite. It'll be sharp as a razor, when you come to get about again, and you'll have to keep it unsatisfied, if you don't want a prolapse. How's your head? A little vinegar on a cloth kept on your forrid would be cooling; shall I send some up? Oh, no! I don't mind trouble, when a friend is suffering, and Caturah has nothing to do but run errands. Don't be afraid to speak out for whatever you want. Good-by. I'll bring your dinner up myself, if I can possibly find the leisure.

Twice in one day will be a dollar, and I shall

charge him for the vinegar. I needn't feel any twinges of conscience, if he *is* a poor young man on a salary, who has to help his mother, for he'll eat me out of house and home when he gets around again. I shall try to scare him out of it as far as possible. I've seen people that couldn't eat enough, after such a spell as he's had.

I don't make so much as I did the first part of the winter; provisions are higher, and that shameful professor cheated me out of two weeks' board, and that other fellow ran away owing me seven dollars. Pork and beans! well, let 'em grumble if they've a mind to. It's lucky for me there isn't much competition in Pennyville; I can do about as I please. "Make hay while the sun shines" is my motto.

CHAPTER XII.

A NEW AND INTERESTING BOARDER.

YOU needn't slip that sewing out of sight, Dora; I saw what it was; and I don't know as you've any particular occasion to blush. You have been married nigh on to four months now, and it's about time to expect to see you drawing patterns on white flannel, and slipping linen cambric into your work-basket, and putting a piece of paper over it, when anybody comes in suddenly. Oh, you needn't deny it! A ruffled shirt-bosom for Mr. Little, is it?—he, he! Tell that to the moreens. I guess it'll turn out to be something for a *little mister*, instead of a Mr. Little. There, now! what would your husband say if he knew I'd beat him with his own weapons? That pun was as good as one of his'n. He's a pleasant man, your husband is, and I've always felt that making a match between you and him was one of the best things I ever did. It gives me solid comfort to reflect upon it.

I've come in to inquire if there's anything you can think of you'd like for dinner, as I've noticed your appetite was rather changeable

recently, and to tell you that I've got a new boarder. He's selected the room back of Mr. Bethuen's, although it's small, because it looks down on Squire Waldon's flower-garden. He says he's *so* fond of flowers! and when you come to see him, you'll believe him, for a sweeter-appearing young man I never saw; and he has such a beautiful name, too—Edgar Clarence Evelyn! Doesn't *that* sound like a novel? He doesn't seem to be more than twenty years old, and his hair curls around his temples, and his cheeks are as red as a girl's. He says he thinks he shall remain all summer in Pennyville; that he's just come here to get away from city life and from something that troubles him, and all he wants is a pleasant place to walk out, and a nice, quiet room, where there's a few trees in sight and some flowers. And oh! he's so melancholy, and so pensile, and so attractive to one's imagination. I've made all kinds of stories up about him already. I suppose he's been disappointed in his first love, and has fled from pain memories; or, perhaps, the lady has a cruel father, and he keeps her from him because he's poor; but he can't be poor, either, for his clothes was exquisite, and he'd plenty of money. Or, perhaps, he's never been in love with anybody, but has read in poetry about the rusty beauty of village maidens, and has just come here to

seek for adventures. Yet I don't think that is it, or he wouldn't have hinted that he had trouble on his mind, as he did when he looked down on the laylocks and tulips in the squire's garden, and said "Flowers were sweet comforters, and drove painful thoughts away."

I can hardly wait till dinner-time for you to see him. He's altogether the most deeply-interesting young gentleman I've ever met; I never hoped nor dreamed that the village of Pennyville and Alvira Slimmens' boarding-house would give shelter to such a beautiful and mysterious being. I feel that I can neither eat nor sleep until I obtain some glimpse of his history. If it wasn't dishonorable, and I hadn't become a member of the church this spring, I should be tempted to peep into his trunk when he was out, and see if he had any letters or photographs, or anything that would give us the clew.

Do you think it inconsistent with my character as a professing Christian to manifest so deep an interest in any young man before I know whether he belongs to the world or not? He looks just as innocent as a child; his eyes are as blue as them johnny-jump-ups in your vase there. I thought I never should write any other than sacred poetry hereafter—that my talents should be desecrated exclusively to hymns and psalms; but if I should discover

that he keeps an album, I don't know that I should have the moral turpitude to refrain from adding a few, a very few verses to its pages. Mr. Bethuen might be displeased if he should ascertain it; but, somehow, I don't think as much of Timothy Bethuen's opinion as I used to, even a week ago. He's a very good young man; his character is unscrupulous; nobody can cast a shadow upon that; but he's desperately humbly; and he has *no air* about him; he's destitute of style, and his hair is as straight and as stiff as a broom, and jest about the color. I've boarded him cheap, and I've encouraged him in every way that lay in my power, because I felt in so doing I was helping on the good cause; I did it in a missionary spirit exclusively. They say that charity begins at home, and I believe the education of young men for the ministry is a good work, and I've did my part by this one. I've stitched his collars, and made his clothes hold out twice as long as if I hadn't have mended 'em; but all that isn't denying that he's an awful plain young man. I'm afraid he'll never cut much of a figure in the pulpit. Poor Timothy! he hasn't the gift of tongues. Maybe I shall be the means of bringing Mr. Evelyn to grace; if I should, what a splendid instrument he would make for the conversion of thoughtless and heedless young women! There wouldn't be a

female in Pennyville but what would come into the flock. I'm sure he would make a second Splurgeon. Perhaps it's going to be revealed to me that this is my mission. Would you believe, he never even asked me the price of board, but engaged his room at once, just because he liked it, without a single peculiary consideration; so I can charge my own terms, which shows how generous and unexperienced in the ways of the world he is. Alvira Slimmens, however, isn't the person to take advantage of unsuspicious innocence; I shan't ask him but half a dollar more than I should if the terms had been agreed on. There's only one thing I regret. Belle Waldon's room looks right down into the garden, and she's setting at her window half her time, this pleasant weather, singing, and sewing, and pulling at them rose-vines, and twisting her curls over her fingers, the idle thing, as if she'd no duties to perform and no serious thoughts of anything, because her father is rich and she's handsome. I don't know of any harm she'd do Mr. Evelyn, only she might distract his thoughts from higher things, in case I should feel it my duty to endeavor to convert him. I'm most sorry he picked out that room, since I've come to think about Belle. She's no modesty about her, or, if she has, it's swallowed up in vanity; and if she should find out what a charming

young man there was there, she'd be at her window more'n ever, pretending she never saw him, and making herself as pretty as she could all the time. I'll keep a sharp eye on that girl, if I have to set up in the attic and peek through a hole to do it; and if I discover anything the least improper, I shall feel bound to let her mother know how things are going on. Bless me! how time does run on! I must curl my hair before dinner, and change my dress. You didn't say what you'd like, and I shan't tell you beforehand that I am going to have sparrowgrass on toast, for I know that's what you've been a-wanting this three days. Be sure and come down to the table, for I want the facility of introducing you to my new boarder, Edgar Clarence Evelyn, the mysterious stranger!

There! it's just as I expected! There's that giddy girl making signs out of her window a'ready, actually kissing her hand over this way, and he hasn't been in the house a week yet. Well, I never! I'm glad I stole up here, if it is rather dusty, and rubbed off this pane of glass, so I can have a good view of what's going on. She ought to be ashamed of herself. Now, then, what's the meaning of that? Talking with her fingers, as sure as my name is Alvira Slimmens! I'll put a stop to such proceedings, if they're carried on much longer, by

just putting on my bonnet, and stepping round and letting her mother know what's transpiring under her very nose without her seeing it. Such an indelicate, bold, immodest creature! a perfect stranger, and throwing kisses to him out of a back window! I wish I understood the deaf-and-dumb alphabet; I'd find out what mischief was afoot. I wonder where *she* learned it; of course, at that seminary. Young girls are just sent away to school nowadays to learn all kinds of mischief and carry on all kinds of capers. I'll stay in this garret as long as she keeps at that window, if it's till tea-time. I hope and pray it ain't anybody she got acquainted with at that seminary, and that has followed her to Pennyville in this romantic manner. It would make a very pretty story, 'specially if there should be an elopement; but it wouldn't agree with *my* plans. Just see that saucy jade! I declare, I can hardly retain myself!

Humph! there's her brother coming into her room; he's at the window, too, pulling Belle's hair, and cutting up as wild as usual. How quick Mr. Evelyn shoved his chair back out of sight; I heard it scraping over the carpet. No doubt he's *very* busy just now reading "Lalla Rookh," or making pictures in that book of his. It looks suspicious to see him getting out of sight when her brother makes his appearance.

I'm afraid it's a love affair! If I make up my mind, certainly, without doubt, that it is, I'll put a flea in Mrs. Waldon's ear—I shall only be doing a Christian and neighborly deed to let her know about such goings on.

I expect Susan's doing them pies dreadful, and Caturah's out there in the yard, throwing stones at the chickens, instead of keeping at them dried apples, as I told her to; but I'm not going down, if the hull house goes to wrack and ruin, as long as that forward chit stays at that window; I've too great a regard for Mrs. Waldon. If she *only* knew who was peeking at her through a cracked pane of glass in a garret window, she'd be a trifle more careful how she flirted and carried on. For the land's sake! what are they laughing at? both of 'em! How I wish I could see through this floor! It's something that fellow is doing at his window; they're both looking over here and laughing to kill. I wish I was peeking through the key-hole of his apartment.

He almost always takes a walk after tea, and I'm going to slip into his room when he's out and ascertain if I can discover anything, provided he don't lock his door, which he always does. As luck will have it, I believe the key to my clothes-closet fits that very door, which is all the better for me. He'll never dream any one's been in, and I can go whenever he isn't

about. There, she's beat a retreat at last—putting on her bonnet to go out—and I can go and overhaul that Caturah, provided I don't break my neck getting down.

How sweet he did look, as he stepped down the front steps, with that bunch of violets stuck in his buttonhole, and looking back and kissing his hand to me with that smile of his. It set my heart to oscillating so, it hasn't got over it yet. Ah, me, I'm infatuated with that young man, perfectly infatuated, and I can't help it, if I did join the church to please Timothy Bethuen. Yes, this key just fits. He won't be out less than half an hour, which'll give time to take a good look. Now, then, let me see how my Edgar Clarence passes his precious time. Here's books—"Byron," "Moore," "Mrs. Browning," "Longfellow," "Kate in search of a Husband," "Devereaux," "The Wide, Wide World," "Jane Eyre," "Consuelo," "Corinne," "Dombey and Son." My, how romantic! novels, and poetry, and two books in French, and here's an album; yes, but it isn't his own, it's some young lady's, that has lent it to him to write in, for here's the name—"Miss Helen Hewitt." It isn't Belle Waldon's, any way, and that's some comfort.

My, what a little foot he's got! that's the sweetest pair of boots I ever saw, and them slippers would fit a girl. He don't appear to

have any bad habits; there are no pipes nor mereshams, nor smell of tobacco about; and his bed and his room are as neat as a woman's. Oh, my, if this isn't curious; here's a thimble, a little gold thimble, with them same initials on, "H. H." *That* girl must be crazy after him, to let him carry off her thimble; and bless me, if he hasn't been using it! He's sewed that button on to that shirt as well as I could have done it. What a darling shirt that is! the ruffle is linen-cambric as fine as a handkerchief, and them sweet little turquoise buttons! I could kiss it, just as it lays there on the table. Here's a bouquet, all faded and dead; of course he'd never miss it, and I could take it and keep it as a sovereign of his stay at my boarding-house. If that album was his own, I would write some verses in it, some time when he was out, and he'd never know who did it or how they came there, unless it was by clairvoyage. I mean to inscribe some lines on a nice sheet of paper, and slip 'em under the door. And here's a blank-book all full of drawings as good as any that portrait-painter that boarded here awhile could make—faces, and flowers, and trees, and eyes, and noses, and chairs, and landscapes; he's got every accomplishment under the sun. I do think he isn't much short of a cherub of light. Ah, ha! here's a profile of Belle Waldon! that's what he was about, and maybe he showed

it to her when they laughed. He's made her full as handsome as she is! And here's—is that his voice I hear in the hall? bless me, how quick he's returned. I'm so flurrid I'll never get this door locked. I hope I left them things as I found 'em. There, it's locked at last.

O Mr. Evelyn! is that you? did you just come from your apartment, or have you been out for your customary walk? He! he! thank you! I shall be *very* happy, certainly, to accompany you the next time you go out. I'm *well* acquainted with all the most seclusive and attracting parts of our village. I often seek its sequestered glades at this season of the year, when the robins begin to warble and the flowers to spring. Youth has ever its own congenial tastes. I sympathize with the frisking lambs and the sweet little bluebirds. But I am retaining you from twilight reveries. Come down to my bodoor, do! whenever you feel like it; I shall be there this evening. Did I not hear you drumming upon my guitar? I'm sure you play; I should esteem it a great treat to have you make free use of it. Remember! this evening, I shall be "at home" in Alvira's bodoor.

I've got them verses done at last, and I think they're the best I ever writ. I don't think any of the lines I dedicated to that heartless Cambric student were equal to these. I shall copy

them off very carefully and slip 'em under the door of his room, and leave him to guess where they came from. I believe I was transpired when I wrote that poem. It'll have its effect, if anything can, 'specially when it's enveloped in so much mystery. Getting it from he don't know who and he can't tell how, finding it under his door or on his table, will give it an air of interest which will add to its effect. Pink or blue? which shall it be? Blue is true, and pink is a declaration of love. I believe I'll choose the pink. He plays the guitar like a melodeon; and I'm sure he meant something when he read those lines to me last night. I must finish these before I seek the retiracy of my bed, if this rheumatiz in my hand don't spoil my writing.

CHAPTER XIII.

WHAT THE HEART OF A MAIDEN SAID TO A YOUNG MAN.

Lines Dedicated to Edgar Clarence E——.

TELL me not in mournful members
  Life is but an empty stream;
In my bosom glows its embers,
  And things are not what they seem.

All those thought-distracting tresses
  Round thy classic profile wreathe,
Fan thy brow with soft caresses,
  Kiss the cheeks that blush beneath.

Life is earnest, life is real,
  And the grave is not a jail;
Thou fill'st my heart's sublime ideal
  Full, as fountains fill a pail.

Art is long and charms are fleeting—
  Rome was built not in a day—
Like a drum my heart is beating,
  Like a flute my pulses play.

Oh, my Edgar Clarence! darling!
  What's the apex of my life?
To comb that silken hair ensnarling,
  To feel thy lips, to be *thy wife!*

Yet I'd die ere I would say it—
  Lest thou scorn her love and slight her,
Yes! She'd die ere she'd betray it,
  Who it was that is the writer.

Thou shalt never guess the being
  Perched upon love's eagle eyrie,
Like the timid wild fawn fleeing,
  Never know her name's Al——.

Not engagement and not sorrow
  Is our inclined end or way,
But to act that each to-morrow
  Finds us nearer than to-day.

Eyes as black as elderberries,
  Hands as small as any girl's,
Lips as dulcet red as cherries,
  Rosy cheeks, and silky curls!

Is it any special wonder
  Thy attractions I adore,
That I tune my lyre to ponder
  On the in—*some one's* bodoor?

No, it is not! No resistance
  Can subdue my youthful heart!
Time, nor tide, nor scorn, nor distance
  Can my thoughts from Edgar part!

Go, thou peerless one! get married!
  Thou shalt never, never know,
Even when she's dead and buried,
  What fond girl adored thee so.

Go, get married! press another
  To thy wildly heaving breast!
Her sensations she will smother,
  In *the grave* she'll soon find rest!

Go and wed! she will not hinder,
  Travelling up life's stormy stair,
Though another from her window,
  Seek thy innocence to snare.

Go, forget me! and to-morrow
  Smile on other maids that smile!
Think not of Al——'s sorrow,
  Yonder dim and distant isle.

Only one thing I desire thee—
  Leave a curl of thy sweet hair
To be buried with Al——
  In the grave of her despair.

If ever there was a mortal transported to another spear of infinitesimal delight, it's me, myself, Alvira Slimmens. He says that he loves me! he has responded to that poetry, in a manner so sweet, so subduing, so gratuitous! But I must recall my senses, I must live over again, in reflection, the happiness that was mine, only last evening. Last evening my hand nestled in his'n, my head reposed upon his shoulder, his curls brushed my cheek as he whispered—what's that, Caturah? I don't care. Tell her to get anything she's a mind to. Put on pound-cake and preserves, only don't bother me—clear out! I can't and won't be disturbed when I'm making up my housekeeping accounts. There! I've shut and locked the door, and I'll see if I can have a minute's peace of mind. What do I care what they get for tea? I wouldn't care if I never eat anything again as long as I lived; I feel as light as a feather; I can hardly refrain from jumping up and down. Let Dora make up them pretty little

fixings, and Mr. Little set and look at her as if he'd eat her up, and Mr. Barker go a-courting Philasta Podd seven times a week, and Timothy Bethuen wait on Philastina home from meeting; my destiny is settled, and I survey the prospects of them all with triumph. Oh, how sweet them laylocks smell! And he's fond of laylocks—he said so when I put a pitcher full of 'em on the mantletry shelf of his room.

But where was I? I want to recall again every one of my sensations. And it was so totally unexpected! I hadn't the least idea in the world but that he was mad in love with that Belle Waldon; it looked suspiciously like it. I'd been up in the garret from two to three hours every afternoon for more'n a week, spying out their didoes. There she was, every blessed day, at that window, throwing out flowers and kissing her fingers, laughing and making faces, and talking by signs; and then putting on her bonnet and going out to walk, and he a-going out a few minutes afterward. I knew he joined her before I followed 'em to see for certain: and if her brother hadn't been along, too, to give a kind of air of propriety to the thing, I should have felt bound to let Mrs. Waldon know what was going on. Dear me! I wonder what they let him hang about so for! If *I* had a lover as perfectly respectable as Mr. Evelyn, I wouldn't have any brother along

like watching Gorgons; and I suppose it was only because he *wasn't* her lover, but mine, after all, that they let him be with her so much. He's told me all about it now—that it wasn't Belle he knew the best, but her brother; that they were college chums; that they graduated at the same time, and that he's come here a-purpose to see him; that Henry Waldon was dreadful anxious to make a match between him and his sister, and that he might have made out if I, me, myself, Alvira Slimmens, hadn't interfused like an angel of light to prevent—them were his very words—by myself securing his devotionate regards, his first, first love; and then he sang:

"Oh, there's nothing half so sweet in life
As love's young dream."

I confessed to him that I thought so, too, that this was *my first* real attachment; and he squeezed my hand, and looked at me *so*—I can hardly endure to recall it yet, it was so thrilling. And it all came about of my hinting to him, in a laughing kind of a way, that somebody had sharp eyes, and somebody had seen certain rather curious circumstances taking place between two windows. We were sitting side by side on the sofa in my bodoor. He'd been playing on my guitar, and I jest allowed my hand to touch his, by accident, and then I attempted to snatch it

away, and when he retained it, I told him very archly that he needn't *press my fingers so*, when I'd seen *another person* kissing hers to him that very afternoon; and then he smiled, and squeezed it all the harder, and looked at me so thrillingly with those bright eyes, and sat up closer by me, and said: "Ah! Miss Slimmens, don't think my heart is *there;* it's only a pretence, to cover up my real feelings. I have never seen but *one* being who fully realized my idea of what a woman *can* be, and she—she—sits by my side! Darling Alvira! need I say more?" And then my head sunk on his shoulder, and I whispered that he need'nt. He's so modest, too! he almost blushed when I attempted to kiss him; he was full as reluctant as a girl. But he's so young. I might be his mother; but he's too innocent to suspect it. I've often heard that boys always fall in love the first time with women older than themselves, and it seems it is even so. After a while we had some such pleasant conversation. He asked me if I knew who put a certain beautiful poem under his door, said it was unique, perfectly unique, and had been one of the first things to fix his particular regards upon the fair authoress. He could not, he knew he could not be mistaken in his intuitions as to who it was, nor that the initials at the bottom —"A. S."—stood for Alvira Slimmens. I said

that I was afraid that he would be afraid of an intellectual being, a woman who wrote out the infusion of her soul; but he replied that a woman had as good a right to be "blue" as a violet or a larkspur, that the violet couldn't help its color, and that the bosom where such poetry burned and glowed must express itself, or burst!

Oh! it was beautiful! I was edified by his thoughts; only I was so all a-tremble with bliss that I could think of nothing else but that I was nestling by his side and that my hand reposed in his. Only last evening that I was so happy! I urged him to set the wedding-day and—hark! he is entering his apartment now. How I start at the sound of his footstep! his tiny, tiny footstep, encased in those dear patent-leather gaiters. He's so exquisite in his dress, and his handkerchiefs always smell of heliotrope. Ah! me, I'm *too* satisfied for earth! Let the bold minx look and giggle out of her window, if she's a mind to; it can't affect me now. But I'll just steal up to the attic and see if she *is* a-performing as usual. I would go down to my bo-door if I thought *he* would follow me; but, as I can't see him until tea-time, I'll keep an eye on that girl.

Yes! just as usual! Pretending to sew, and stealing looks out of her eyes all the time. Her mouth keeps dimpling with the laugh in her;

but I guess she'll have on another face before long. It is evident he has not told her yet. There! down goes her sewing on the floor, and up goes her hand over her eyes, and she's staring and staring—my! such talking across lots I never saw.

Oh, dear! I'm so tired of expecting him every instance; I wonder what's keeping him. He went out for his walk after tea, and he hasn't come in yet, and it's nigh on to nine o'clock. Last night, at this hour, I was by his side here on this sofa, listening to his gentle voice. It is true that it was I who *first* hinted at love—I offered him my hand and fortune; but it's Leap Year, thank the fates, and I'd a perfect right. He responded instantaneously; he said I was all his fancy painted me, and more—much more. I believe I'll just steal into his room and see what I can see, for I know he's out. I should have heard his step if he walked on eggs, for I've been doing nothing but listening since nine o'clock. I shall hear him when he comes in, in time to meet him on the stairs and invite him into my bodoor.

How sweet his apartment smells! it's like a rose—

"Ethereal! it is
His breathing that perfumes his chamber thus!"

as Milton says. It almost takes my breath away to step into it; it sort of frightens me,

and pleases me, too. I do believe I love that boy. I'll just take a peep, and back again to meet him. His trunk's standing open; it's always been locked with a patent lock, and I've never been able to see the inside of it before.

Well, if this isn't curious! Ladies' clothes, dresses, petticoats, shawls, jewelry! Can my Edgar be a robber, be a smuggler who enters boarding-houses only to secure the wearing apparel of its inmates? No! the thought is too enervating; besides, if innocence was ever impressed upon a mortal face, it is on his. He's incapable of any deceit. Here, on the band of these—these garments, and on these handkerchiefs, are the same mysterious initials; they're all marked "H. H.," and some of 'em "Helen Hewitt," and done with it. It can't be a sister, for it isn't the same name as Evelyn, that's plain; it can't be the clothing of a dead young woman to whom he has been engaged to be married, for he told me with his own lips that he'd never loved any but myself. Oh, dear! I wish I knew. I shan't sleep a wink to-night, not a wink, in my endeavors to fathom this very peculiar and anonymous circumstance.

Ah-**h**! perhaps *this* will tell something! Here's the photograph of a female; it looks enough like him to be his sister—it *is* his sister; and she must be married, young as she looks, to a gentleman by the name of Hewitt. How

simple, after all, and I to be suspecting *him* of being a smuggler—him—my precious Edgar! I could fairly kiss his sister's picture, I feel so relieved. She's got nice clothes, anyhow; they must be a very good fami—— Mercy, Mr. Evelyn! I beg your pardon! I *really* did not hear you come in. You see, I was passing by, and found your door open, and your trunk standing wide, and I was afraid some smuggler had entered the premises and been robbing you. I just stepped in to see if anything was missing, and to close your trunk for you. Went out in a great hurry, and wasn't aware you left it open? Perhaps you didn't. You'd better look round and see if any of your property is missing. I just this instance stepped in, and haven't had time to see a thing yet. Why, you've shut that trunk without hardly looking to see its contents. Never mind; you're money is in the other one? You're so careless and unsuspicious; just like one of your age. Do you know, my darling, how long this evening has seemed? What kept you? I waited in my bodoor for your footstep until my heart ached. Sit down here, dearest, and whisper to your Alvira what it was that detained you.

CHAPTER XIV.

HOW SHE CAME TO TAKE A LADY BOARDER.

I DON'T know hardly why I feel so uneasy this afternoon, unless it's because Edgar was out at dinner-time. I've got so I can't endure to have him out of sight, and yet we've only been engaged three days. I had spring chickens stewed in cream a purpose for him, and he wasn't here after all; and I had the satisfaction of seeing that Timothy Bethuen eat at least two thirds of a chicken, and my beloved Edgar never to have a taste. I'd tell Timothy, out and out, that I couldn't board him at the price I've been doing, less than any of the rest of my boarders, any longer, if I expected to keep boarding-house many weeks more; but as I don't, I guess I won't turn the poor fellow away till they all go. I warrant he was surprised not to find his socks darned, this washing; but I've done with darning old socks in hopes of catching a preacher. Miss Slimmens' prospects have brightened of late. I do feel terribly uneasy, though. I believe I'll take another recontre out of that garret-window, to pass away the time. Belle Waldon's been making up a mighty

pretty white dress lately, pretty enough for a bride; but I guess nobody has asked her to have him, for all that. I wonder at her making it up herself, too, when they generally hire all their dressmaking done. It was about finished yesterday; she was putting the lace on the sleeves. I'll just climb up to my lookout, and see what she's about next.

Well, did I ever! A wedding, sure enough! I can see all over the room pretty much. There is Belle, dressed in white, with a wreath on her head; and there's somebody else standing before the glass, in that very dress Belle was making, and Belle is fixing a veil on her hair. *That's* the one that's going to be married, sure. I wish she'd turn her head so I could see her face! I'll perish of curiosity in less than two minutes, if she doesn't look round. What a flutter they're in! Why *won't* she turn her head.

As sure as I'm alive, it's that very girl whose picture I saw. Yes, it's Helen Hewitt; it's his sister, and I'll bet he's over there now. Why didn't he invite *me* to the wedding, I'd like to know! Who's entitled to his confidence if I am not? No, I'm *not* mistaken. Dear! dear! If I could only see through a grindstone, I'd know what was going on. That provoking curtain has just fell down of itself, a purpose to vex me.

There's that Caturah, hollering after me as loud as she can; but I'm not going to hear her just yet. What's that she says? A strange gentleman in the parlor wants to see me immediately, on important business! Well, wonders never cease! What he can want is the question; I must go and see. They've put that curtain down, anyhow, and it's no use to stand here peeking.

Good-afternoon, sir. Have I taken any young lady to board lately? and if so, is she in the house now? *No, sir!* this is a gentlemen's boarding-house exclusively, sir. Your daughter, sir? And you've been informed that she has been residing under this roof for several weeks? It's a mistake. There's been a very nice young gentleman here for some time — a stranger. Evelyn—Edgar C. Evelyn, sir, is his name. Describe his personal appearance? Really, I don't know as you've any right to inquire; but, as I've no objections, I think I'll answer you. *Very* handsome, but small; black eyes, full of fire; wavy ringlets; small hands and feet; low voice; rosy lips; a cunning little scar on his left cheek. No, sir, he's not in the house now; he was not at home to dinner, and has not come in yet.

Your daughter? Mr. Evelyn your daughter? You heard she'd dressed herself up like a man? Foolish child! Oh, I see through it all now;

but hurry, or you'll be too late. They're getting married now, this minute, and you'll be too late. I'll show you the house—right round the corner, on the other side of the block. I'll go with you, if you'll wait till I catch up a bonnet.

Too late, sir. There's the minister coming away, and there's the squire's buggy flying around the corner. You can go in, if you want to, and I'll go back home, but your bird has flown; I saw her in that buggy with Harry Waldon, and they've been married this half hour, I know too well.

An account of the affair in the *Pennyville Eagle?* Let me see it, Dora, do! (Reads.)

"HIGHLY ROMANTIC AFFAIR.

"A highly romantic affair disturbed the usual quiet of our little village a day or two ago, which has furnished subjects for the gossips of the most exciting character. As we happen to be in the confidence of one of the parties, and as the affair is likely to become public any way, we will give the correct version. Our friend Harry Waldon, 'the best fellow that ever lived,' and well known to all our citizens, fell in love while at college with a pretty girl, a mischievous, wild, enchanting creature, and withal an heiress. Whether her parents thought her too precious to bestow upon anybody, or whether they did not fully appreciate the excellent quali-

ties of our friend Harry, deponent sayeth not, but they opposed the match, and Harry came home to 'watch and wait' until some change should take place. Soon after arrived in town and stopped at a certain popular boarding-house, kept by a maiden lady, a young gentleman of modest and graceful demeanor and fashionable appearance. He created quite a sensation. He was delicate, almost feminine, in his appearance. His window overlooked the garden and residence of Squire Waldon. All went on smoothly. We noticed that our friend Harry wore a radiant countenance. We wondered at the change in his demeanor. We ceased to rally him upon his pensive appearance. But we didn't know—— Who did? Nobody. One day an elderly gentleman arrived in search of a fair fugitive. But he was ten minutes too late. Warning had been received. As he stepped out of Miss ——'s boarding-house the minister stepped out of Squire Waldon's. A swift horse bore the happy couple to the expected train. What more remains to be said? We wish them a long life and plenty of happiness, only hoping that the charming lady will never again feel the inclination, or the necessity for—as it is vulgarly expressed—donning the masculine nether habiliments—in short, wearing the breeches."

May I take the paper to my room, Dora? Humph! the impudent jade!—and to think that I actually kissed her! My blood boils when I think of it; and it boils harder still when I read that scrap of paper picked up in her

room after she went away. Let me look at it again.

"Such fun, Belle, such fun alive! I thought I should have suffocated! She wanted to kiss me, but I resisted a long time, for I was afraid she took snuff; but at last she conquered me—she was the strongest. However, she *doesn't* take snuff. The kiss, whatever else it was, was not *snuffy*."

Ha! snuffy, indeed! If ever he brings his bride back here she'll get her dress torn some day. She didn't reflect she was making an enemy for life. Harry Waldon had better settle in some other place, if he wishes his wife to have any peace. I'll have my revenge for that scrap of paper yet!

CHAPTER XV.

RAT EXTERMINATOR.

WHAT'S that you remarked, Dr. Burton? Arsenic? Oh, my! I thought that horrid stuff was only good for killing rats or committing suicide! It'll make a woman of fifty, you say, as fair and blooming as a girl of twenty, and it's wonderful for fattening people up? If I was in any danger of getting to be forty or fifty years old very soon, I believe I'd commence taking it, to preserve my complexion. I don't suppose I shall ever need fattening, though I look rather thin in the face; it runs in the Slimmens family to be thin in the face, and fleshy otherwise. Them Circassian women must be dreadfully vain females, to take such terrible stuff as arsenic to keep themselves white and soft. Don't you think so, Mr. Bethuen? Don't you think it perfectly unexcusable for the feminine sex to be given to such arts? Their minds ought to be set on higher things, Mr. Bethuen, on higher things, I've long felt. But I suppose them Circassian ladies are heathens and Mahomaders, and don't know any better. Don't you ever feel as if you had a call to go and teach them

better? Only to reflect upon their eating arsenic like sugar candy, and we sitting here in our comfortable homes, and never making an effort in their behalf! Oh, Mr. Bethuen, it's disparaging to our benevolence that such is the fact! But it is not so bad in them as to think that English women and our own American girls are a-going and doing the same, as much as they durst.

Eating arsenic to make themselves look fair, you say, Dr. Burton? I'm glad you told me; I'm glad I'm warned against the depravity which exists in our midst. After this, when I see anybody *very* plump and white, I shall be sure they are arsenic eaters. There's them twins, Philista and Philistina Podd, as fat and babyish—— Oh, you needn't color up so, Mr. Barker; I didn't mean nothing, only I wished to warn Mr. Bethuen of what *might* be. It would be dreadful for a minister of the gospel to find out that his wife was a suicide, as it were, a self-poisoner, and all for the vain glory of the flesh. Durstn't never leave it off, after they've once become victims to its pernicious influence? Have to keep on taking more and more? O doctor! And how much is it safe to begin with? I merely inquire to satisfy a physical curiosity. How many did you say, Mr. Little? Forty grains? You should think the ladies would have scruples against taking

such drachms?—he! he! But that's borrowed wit, for I've heard it before.

Have some more of the fried trout, doctor; they didn't cost me anything, for Mr. Little caught 'em himself, and made 'em a present to the house, so you can thank him for 'em. Have some more, Dora, do. Dear, dear, what a light and trifling generation this is getting to be! Hoops and bustles, and crinoline enough for a balloon, and now it's arsenic for an emetic. He, Mr. Little? Tartar emetic, you should call it, considering where it originated. You jest about the soberest subjects. He's a little too much of a jesticulator; don't you think so, Mr. Bethuen?

O Lord of mercy! I've went, and gone and done it! I know I have! I feel it *here!* Committed suicide! I've gone and killed myself! Oh, how it burns! my stomach's all a-fire! Oh, I wish I hadn't—I wish I hadn't tried it; but I was so awful yellow, and it would show through spite of all I could do, and so wrinkly, and now I've gone and poisoned myself. I've taken too much! it's eating me up and burning me up alive! Dora! Dora! where are you! Oh! let me in, and tell me what to do! I'm sick—I'm poisoned with arsenic! I jest took a little, not much bigger than a quinine powder; and my stomach's all griping up and burning like fire. Take an antidote? What? Eggs? Oh, dear,

I wonder if there's any in the house; I'll go and see. You go and find out where the doctor is. If he isn't in his room, send Caturah after him—quick. Never mind the eggs; run for the doctor. Oh-h-h! Susan, where's the eggs? Bring me some. Here! hand 'em to me—a dozen. Oh-h-h!

There! I have swallowed a dozen raw. O doctor! is that you? I'm afraid you're too late. I'm poisoned; I'm dying dead this minute. Did you bring your stomach pump? Arsenic—it's arsenic. I'll open my mouth. Oh-h-h!

I believe I feel better. Do you think it's all up? Do you think I'm out of danger? O doctor! I've run a narrow risk this time. It all comes of them pesky rats! I got some vermifuge, or exterminator, or whatever you call it, and put it on a plate in the pantry to keep the rats away; and somehow I forgot, and mistook it for sugar, and sweetened some lemonade with it I was making, the day was so warm. I never thought, till I begun to be sick, what was the matter. O doctor! if it hadn't been for them eggs and that pump I shudder to think—— Yes, I'll lay down; I feel as weak as a cat. If you will jest help me up the stairs, I'll go to bed. Dora? Yes, I'm afraid I scart her most to death. After I'm comfortable, you'd better go and see if the excitement has hurt her. Oh, my, them pesky rats! There! that'll do.

Come in again after supper, and see how I am. And, doctor, a word more—be sure and let the boarders know it was them pesky insects that did it.

Now't I'm out of danger, you'll never catch me at *that* again, not if I get to be yellower than brimstun itself, and need bleaching more'n old Aunt Peggy's best bunnit. My sensations were undescribable; I hardly knew which it was best to send for—the doctor or Mr. Bethuen. I hope Timothy Bethuen won't distrust the truth of the matter. I didn't much more than begin to feel better until I luckily thought of laying it to the rats. Nobody'll guess the truth but Dora, and she's seen me in too many predicaments for me to care for her. She's a good soul, for she never betrays me; but now that she's a husband, it will be different. I'm awful afraid she'll confide it to him, and he's so fond of fun, he'll let it all out; he's an awful person to get jokes on people. I feel as weak and used up as if I'd been sick a month. I shall have to keep my room two or three days at least; and there's them currants getting too ripe for jelly, and the house a-going to rack and ruin, with nobody to watch them everlasting girls. But I'm thankful I'm alive, currant jelly or no currant jelly; and the next time anybody catches *me* taking arsenic to bleach myself, they may set me down for a bigger simpleton than I am. I'm

afraid there's no such thing as making a young woman out of an old one, as easy as making a new Tuscan out of an old one. I hate to give up—I *can't*, that's the long and short of it. But ugh, that arsenic.

CHAPTER XVI.

"BLESS US! THIS IS PLEASANT RIDING ON THE RAIL."

I'VE come to ask a very great favor of you, Dora, if you feel equal to the task. I've been so poorly ever since that dose of rat poison that I took by mistake, I'm afraid I'm a-going into a decline. Dr. Burton recommends sea air; he says he knows of nothing but a change of air that'll do me any particular good, and I've about made up my mind to go to Newport for a couple of weeks. It's a very expensive place, I know; but I've made considerable money since I came into this house, and a young lady ought to see something of the world outside of her native village—'specially if she anticipates ever making a good match. We often hear that

"Distance lends enchantment to the view,"

and it may be that I shall be more properly appreciated in a new spear than I am in Pennyville—particularly if it isn't discreetly given out that Miss Slimmens is a *beauty*, a *blue*, and an *heiress*. I've made up my mind to afford the money for the tower; but I don't know

what to do about them everlasting girls. Caturah's handy, and Susan's got so she can go ahead as well as I can; and if you'd just trouble to have an eye to the sugar, and the tea-caddy, and a few little things, I don't know but what I might trust 'em. My family's uncommonly small now, and they won't have much to do.

Thank you! Much obliged. But it's just like you, Dora; you're always ready to do a good turn for anybody that asks it. I felt rather delicate about putting any care on you, *at present*, though I don't ask of you to do a thing but to keep the keys. Yes, I do "need the change;" I realized it myself. I can hardly drag about the house this warm weather. And now that the matter's settled, what shall I wear? that's the great question. I expect my wardrobe ll cost me more than all my other expenses put together. I must dress genteelly, or I shan't stand any chance to make an impression. That white satin I got the time the professor boarded here will do for one ball-dress, and my pink silk for another. I've got a handsome watch and chain, you know, and considerable jewelry, and if you'd lend me the pearl set Mr. Little gave you on your birthday, I'd take good care of it, and consider it a favor. You won't be going out much this warm weather to need it, and it just suits my style, don't

you think so? Probably you'd never have had it if it hadn't been for my good-will, making a match between you and George; so you see I consider I've a sort of claim on it. He! he! I think a new white muslin, flounced to the waist, with blue trimmings and your pearl set, will be sweet for another evening toilet. I'm going to take my new gray more-antique for a traveling-dress. I expect it will get ruined; but, considering that I'm going for the benefit of my health, and to see a little of genteel society, I guess I can afford it. There's nothing like making an astonishing impression at first. I hope those darling hats, with lace around the brims, and ribbons flying, will be the fashion again this season at the watering-places; they're so bewitching, and they'll be so becoming to my long curls. Ringlets flowing from beneath a broad-brimmed straw hat cannot fail to impart a coquettish appearance. I think I shall wear one during my promenades, whether other ladies do or not. I have hardly decided whether to adopt a playful or pensile demeanor; but, considering my delicate health, and that I am unaccompanied by an escort, I shall likely decide in favor of the pensile.

How soon? About a week, if I can get the dressmaker to hurry up my things. I shall ruffle the white muslin myself. I guess I've been out of the millinery business so long there

won't be any odor of brimstun follow me to Newport. I intend to pass myself off as a young lady of leisure, of only the most literal pursuits, who inherited my estates in Pennyville by contract. I wish I knew some agreeable person who was going along at the same time; I'm such a timid creature, and shall feel so unprotected in the cars. I shan't sleep much of the nights till I'm ready, and the start is over. I feel so flusterated by the prospect and the hurry and all, my nerves are quite unstrung. Taking that exterminater was one of the worst things I ever done. I shall send to-night by express, to Boston, for a new set of curls and braid, and—shut the door, Dora, please—and I've nigh about concluded to order a wig, and done with it. I think that poison took the color out of my hair; it's certainly getting gray. I might color it, of course, as I've been doing for several years; but it's so thin and harsh. A nice, thick, glossy wig of shiny false hair would be better, and not half the trouble. Only don't tell anybody, for I wouldn't have it get to Mehitable Green's ears for a fortune. I pulled hers off once, you remember, and I've no doubt she's waiting for me to get to wearing one, to return the compliment.

You'd like to know what I received in that box that came from Boston by express this morning? I've no objections to satisfying your

curiosity, Mr. Little, nor that of any of the gentlemen whom I see before me, gathered round the convivial board. The box contained ruches to sew around the flounces of the white tarlatan you saw me making, which accounts for its being so light. Hey? What's that you remarked? A "perverse and wig-ged generation." You ought to be ashamed of yourself, George, punning upon Scripture—hadn't he, Mr. Bethuen? You don't intend to insinuate I'd tell an up and down wrong story about a trifle?

> "Trifles, light as hair,
> Are, to the jealous, confirmation strong
> As proofs of Holy Writ."

O George! clear out with you! You're the greatest pest and bother that ever sat down to a boarding-house table. Dora, if you don't put a stop to his nonsense, I'll have to take him in hand myself. What's that?—

> "With all my *false*, you love me still"?

He! he! Well, a body might as well stop a mill-race as to stop your propensity for quizzing, only I trust the rest of my family will not take your insinuations in earnest. How? There goes Mehitable Green, and you must overtake her, and inform her of the arrival of a box of Russias from Boston? If that fellow hasn't actually caught his hat and run! Do you sup-

pose he really intends to tell anything, Dora? Only wants to tease me? He'll be the death of me yet, with some of his practicing jokes.

Have you any objection to my occupying this vacant seat, sir? The cars are so crowded I am impelled to sit by somebody, and I have selected you because I feel certain you are a clergyman—now, have I guessed aright? Oh, I judge by your white cravat, and your general appearance, sir, but mostly by your countenance; your countenance speaks for itself. I'm a great observer of physiology; I flatter myself I can read a stranger at a glance. The study of the human face divine is my particular fort, and, brief as my experience with mankind has thus far necessarily been, I am seldom mistaken in my judgments. To Newport for my health, sir. And, as I am impelled to travel without an escort, I have taken the liberty of placing myself under your temporal protection for the period of our mutual journey. I shall not undertake to explain, even to myself, the feelings which prompted me to select *you* out of all these people. There are mesmeric mysteries on earth which I seek not to unfold; I simply resign myself to their guidance. Your clerical air, doubtless, had somewhat of an influence; but that was not all—I am certain that it was not all.

Married? Not yet; time enough for that yet, sir. I've ever been opposed to early mar-

riages, which has induced me to refuse the offers I have thus far received; though I feel that I am *now* arriving at an age when it will be safe for me to make a choice. Yet, while not a believer in early marriages, I *have* ever been a believer in love at first sight. What is your opinion upon the much-disputed topic, if I make so free as to inquire? Have you never yet realized the sensation experienced by the poet, when he says, "Oh——" mercy, how terrified I was! I thought there had been a collusion, certainly, there was such a jolt. Excuse me for the unpremeditated manner in which I threw myself into your protecting arms. I knew not what I was about until I felt your breath fan my cheek, which revived me from my trance of terror. I'm excessively timid; the wild fawn of the forest cannot be more so. I am afraid I have mussed your shirt-bosom, sir. I ought never to attempt to travel alone.

What were we conversing about? You are right; it *was* about love at first sight, and you had not yet given in your opinion. You are a firm believer in it? I knew you was; I could tell it without asking. Is it not curious that *I*, clinging as I am, have never yet beheld the being in the shape of man to whom I should be willing to yield up my affections?—that is, never until *recently*—indeed, I may say *quite* recently—within an hour. My retired and

thoughtful life has been mostly given to meditation, music, and poetry, and to the dispensation of that fortune which was mine into the channels of benevolence. Like the sensitive plant, I have shrunk from the touch of man. What! do you really get out at the next station? Then we have only met to part. I feel as if this was hardly to be the terminus of our acquaintance, so pleasant upon my side at least. Ah, thanks! you flatter me. You are sure you are the greatest gainer by our meeting? Perhaps you will not object to an interchange of cards; here is mine, with my address in full. Providence may again throw us together. If you should be in Newport during the next two weeks, I shall have the pleasure of renewing our delightful intercourse. Ah, the cars progress more slowly—they pause. And must you go? I am *much* obliged for the protection you have afforded to a sensitive female. Farewell, till we meet again.

Baggage? Yes, lots of it. S'pose a lady is going to Newport without any baggage? I've six trunks, and all of 'em packed tight. Want my checks, do you? Sure you're the checkman? I'm not to be imposed on, if I am a female. I've been to Boston before. Oh, I've no doubt it's all right. Here they are in my pocket. But great goodness! where's my purse? I've lost it, for it isn't in my pocket, and I felt

it there only a little while ago—just before that gentleman left me at the last station. He must have stolen it; nobody else could have done it, for it was on the inside, next to him. And he looked so genteel and benevolent! What? A regular swell? Thought I might have known? I didn't—oh, I didn't! I thought he was a clergyman. Fifty dollars gone, out and out. Ha! the greatest gainer by our meeting, indeed? I shouldn't wonder. It's a mercy I didn't have all my money in my pocket; I'd sense enough to put the most of it in my bosom, pinned and sewed to my stays. Fifty dollars, hard-earned cash, and all my susceptibilities thrown away besides! Fifty dollars! That'll cut just so much of my stay in Newport, for I shan't spend a cent more than I laid out to. It's too bad! I'll renounce him—I'll renounce him to every police-officer in Boston. I'll leave a full description of his person at headquarters. I'll offer a reward for his reprehension. Yes, I'll give a hundred dollars for the pleasure of confronting him in a court of justice, and being the means of consigning him to the State's prison. I'll make it my business to go to the telegraph-office, and have him telegraphed for. It's a burning and a crying shame when an unprotected female cannot travel upon an American railroad without running the risk of being robbed by genteel-looking men in white cravats. It's

bad enough being smashed up, pitched down a precipice, but to be robbed at every turn by the nicest-looking—— My watch is gone, too! broke right off from the chain! Oh, dear! I believe I shall turn round and go home, I feel so sick and disheartened! I would not have parted with that watch for a hundred dollars. Here we are in the depot. Policeman! policeman! here! show me to the telegraph-office right away, and take my disposition. I've been robbed—shamefully robbed. Oh, dear! if my journey begins in *this* way, I don't know what it'll end in. I only hope the detecting officers will secure that villain.

Describe him? Picture to yourself a wolf in sheep's clothing, going about seeking whom he may devour—a—— I must be more identical, must I, in my description? Well, then, a black coat, and a white cravat, and a large diamond on his left finger, and a pious-looking mole on the left of his nose, and a sanctimonious voice, and a meek look of the eyes, and black whiskers, and a ministerial air, about six feet tall, with small feet, and a modest smile. Think you know him, do you? Famous gambler and pickpocket? Oh, my! and to think that I sat beside him, that I confided in him, that I gave him my card! Only to think, me, Miss Slimmens, of Pennyville, giving my card to a gambler and a pickpocket! Humph!

CHAPTER XVII.

EPISTOLARY FROM NEWPORT.

DEAR DORA: As I am confined to my apartment by a very unfortunate accident, so also by being too indisposed to go out, I have plenty of time in which to write you, as I promised. This is the eleventh day of my arrival in Newport, and about time for me to be starting for home, for two reasons, one of which is, my means are giving out, owing partly to being robbed, and the other is the accident to which I referred in the beginning. I suppose you are curious to know what kind of a time I have had? and though much of it has equaled my most sanguinary anticipations, there have been a *few* drawbacks to that unalloyed happiness which is never ours on earth, and which I will confide to *you*, Dora, on account of your uncommon discretion for a woman, never talking about what'll make other folk trouble—so different from *that* Green and those Pea-Podds, whom I detest, as well as many other Pennyville people. For a mean, gossiping, scandalizing place, I think Pennyville will hold its own with the best. I never

bought a little, innocent box of pearl-powder, or dropped a remark about a neighbor, that it wasn't scattered to the four winds all over that village.

> "One sickly sheep infests the flock,
> And poisons all the rest."

Mehitable Green is that "sickly sheep," to speak in a meteor—a talking old maid, a pest to the whole community. But what on earth I'm writing about her for, when I've got other topics for my pen, is more than I know.

Yes, Dora, I was robbed; before I had even reached Boston I was robbed of my beautiful watch that I bought the time I expected to marry "A. de M.," and fifty dollars, good bills, which were in my purse. If you'd see the man that done it, you'd have no more confidence in mortality. I was certain he was a minister of the gospel. He was one of the most respectable-looking persons I ever met; and, although being a stranger, I, of course, endeavored to keep him at a distance, yet, when he offered me his protection in the cars, I did not feel the least hesitancy in accepting it. We even exchanged cards at his earnest solicitation. But he'll suffer for it. I've the consolation to know that he's safe in jail, and I've got my watch back, too; the money will have to go. He'll have the comfort to find that *some* women can-

not be imposed upon with immunity—not only robbing and deceiving them, but taking their cards to keep in the pocket of a gambler and a pickpocket. I acted with my usual promptitude in immergencies. I didn't rest till I got the police on the track, and telegraphed to New York and other places, and they knew him by the graphical description I gave of him, and he was arrested with my watch, and my name engraved on it, in his possession, so they sent me the watch by express; and I shall be very careful, going home, to keep all my money in my bosom, and not to let anybody, not the bishop himself, or the President, sit on the same seat. It was one of the sweetest moments of my existence when I heard of his arrest. If there's anything I pride myself upon, it's my discrimination, and I hate to be fooled. A person that can wind other people around their finger as easily as I can don't relish getting tricks played on them, 'specially by sharpers and impostors upon the community.

I've made *some* capital out of that fifty dollars besides, total loss as it was, for it is currently reported in Newport, and especially at the hotel where I am stopping, that I lost a thousand dollars in money and a set of diamonds worth fifteen hundred, besides a draft for a large amount, upon which I have

ordered the payment stopped. It has served as a very good subject for a great many persons introducing themselves to me. I had the advantage of appearing upon the stage as a lioness immediately, besides the felicities it afforded me for circulating the rumor of my being an heiress. Jest *how* it got started that I had lost so much, I, of course, can't say; but I have not contradicted it. The old agate that "a rolling stone gathers no moss" ain't true with regard to stories; they roll up faster than a ball of snow, and I shouldn't wonder if, before I left this place, it was currently reported to be ten thousand dollars and enough jewelry to set up a jewelry store. You know I never was troubled with diffidence, and, being used to doing business for myself, I wasn't a bit embarrassed to arrive here without an escort. I thought it fallacy to take just as good a room as I durst to, which I did. The very evening of my arrival at this house there was a hop, as they term it, and I made up my mind to attend, if I did have to enter the ball-room hanging, meteorically speaking, upon my own arm. I wore my new w-g—don't let George see this letter—and the curls were beautiful. I used a quarter of a box of Mean-Fun, and spent just an hour on my eyebrows and cheeks, besides taking a tablespoonful of cologne-water to make my eyes bright. I took out all my dresses,

and looked at them over and over. My choice hung between the white satin and the white flounced mull with the rushes. I finally decided upon the mull. I wore five starched petticoats over a full-sized panier skirt, and the flounces set out sweetly. My waist didn't look bigger than a churn-dasher, and was encircled by a blue festus. Your pearl set capped the climax. I am certain I never appeared so well, which imparted an airy gayety to my spirits, and enabled me to enter the ball-room with a fairylike vivacity. I was conscious of becoming the "sinecure of neighboring eyes;" everybody looked at me and whispered, and looked at me again. I overheard some of their commentaries. "She doesn't appear at all depressed by her loss; she must be very wealthy, to bear it with such composure," said one. "Those pearls are quite pretty; I suppose she wears them because all her diamonds were stolen. Did you hear about it?" said another. "Whom *can* I get to introduce me?" I heard a lovely young gentleman inquiring, in the most agitated manner. "Oh, she's so exclusive she knows nobody, and so independent she goes wherever she's a mind to," was the answer. "I know we should have a game time, if we could only get introduced," said he again. Jest then he met my eye, and I had a good notion to bow and smile, but concluded I'd

better *seem* more reversed at first, even if I didn't feel so.

I was jest wishing, with all my heart, that I did know somebody that would ask me to polka, when I saw the ladies hopping and flying around like a parcel of robins learning to use their legs and wings, now on one foot, now on t'other, and then fluttering round and round *so* delightfully, supported by the elegantest men I ever beheld, with mustaches, and gaiters, and spy-glasses suspended around their necks—I was jest wishing and feeling as if I could not remain in my seat another instance, when—oh, Dora, whom should I behold at the other side of the ball-room but—guess who. You never *could* guess if you should strive for a week. I actually turned faint and thought I should go over, when I realized who it was. Everything got dark, and the music buzzed like a spinning-wheel; but I got over it in a minute, and then —my, how mad I was! My blood boiled in my veins! I forgot the heavenly part, everything except that horrid letter; you remember it, Dora—"dear old girl!" Yes, Dora, it was actually Adonis de Mountfort that I saw standing and conversing with the very young gentleman whom I had overheard wishing to be introduced to your humble servant. They had been looking at me, I know, though Adonis turned his eyes in another direction as quick as he

could—but his name isn't Adonis, or De Mountfort either, but Albert D. Morton—and pretty soon he looked back again, and stared right straight at me; and I presume he saw how mad I was, and that I was going to have him arrested for embellishment, false pretenses, and breach of promise. I looked him straight in the eyes—oh, Dora do you remember what beautiful eyes he had?—without flinching, and said to myself: "'Old enough to know better?' Ha, young man, you'll get your pay for *that*, now!" when what should he do but jest take that other gentleman by the arm, and come across the room, and hold out his hand to me with the sweetest smile, and say, as cool as a cucumber:

"My friend Miss Slimmens, is it possible this is you? I am *delighted* to meet you here in this congenial scene. How *are* you? Not married, I suppose? Never been able to meet a suitable spirit yet, eh, in this ethereal world? Allow me to take the liberty of presenting to you my particular friend, Mr. Bowser. He was dying to make your acquaintance, and was very much pleased when he learned from me that you and I were *old friends*, my dear Miss Slimmens."

I felt as if I should choke with surprise and rage; and I couldn't hardly be mad at him either, he looked so innocent and unconscious,

so I jest bowed, and was wondering what on earth to do or say—whether to rise up there and cry out "Thief!" or to pass it by till to-morrow, which would give him a chance to escape—when he bent over and whispered in my ear:

"My *dear* friend, let bygones be bygones! You don't want it understood here that you are a retired milliner, nor just *how* you came to lose seven hundred dollars by me; you've come here to make a match; I'll help you. I know everybody and everything, and all about them. The young gentleman I just introduced to you is a rich young Southerner; all the girls are dying for him. You will be the most envied of your sex. You say nothing, and I'll say nothing, and it'll be just the thing I can get you a large circle of admirers in less'n two days."

Before I could reply, Mr. Bowser was pressing me to dance, and I was standing on the floor before I knew it. He danced splendidly. I enjoyed it excessively, in spite of my rheumatiz, and after it was over, I was introduced to several others, and, before the evening was ended, I had the gratification of feeling, Dora, that Miss Slimmens, of Pennyville, was the belle of the ball, and observed of all observers. I retired to my room without a single regret for that robbery, and in such a state of flustra-

tion that sleep did not visit my pillow till broad daylight.

The next day I made more acquaintances. Some of the ladies were very polite, and consoled with me for my loss, which I told them, carelessly, was of no consequence, as my jewelry was not the gifts of friends, except the watch, which I should be glad to get back. I found myself getting along so well, and had already the case of the pickpocket to attend to, I made up my mind it was fallacy to let Mr. Morton (*alias* de Mountford) go, and not have him arrested for a swindler—at least, for the present; and, on the whole, I'm rather glad I took the course I did. With so many chances thrown right in my face and eyes, as it were, I preferred keeping it a profound secret that I'd ever bleached bunnits for a living.

You know I always had a remarkably genteel air, which has been in my favor; and the way I've pulled and hauled Susan and Caturah around has been of advantage to me in ordering the waiters, who are killingly attentive, in expectancy of what I'll give 'em, which won't be much, if they only knew it. I go to the table after almost everybody is there, and I never fail to create a sensation. I see it out of one eye, though I don't purtend to. In the early part of the day I generally pass my time in the reception-rooms, and I always have a

book, and generally a gold pencil and a piece of paper with me, and I adopt a pensile air, suitable to a literary person, as well as something peculiar in my dress, as *singularity* is considered a mark of talents. The gentlemen are very fond of conversing with me on intellectual topics. However, as *you* are not literary, Dora, I suppose you don't care to hear. The politest person in the house to me has been Mr. Morton; he treats me with the greatest reverence before everybody, and says and does the nicest things. He's taken me out to ride twice, and we've been down on the beach every day to see the feminine portion of the visitors bathing; but I wouldn't go in the water myself, for reasons—you know, Dora.

Don't think, from what I've said, that I have *forgiven* him. I haven't, and I never shall. I am only acting from fallacy, and so is he, and we understand each other. The acquaintance I think *most* of is quite another person. He's a widower; I should say about thirty-five; rather small, but dresses more sweetly than any other man in Newport. His dress is exceptionable, from top to toe, and he handles his spyglass like a person "to the manger born." The only imperfection in his appearance is a slight, a very slight limp, which I suppose is rheumatiz, and which prevents his dancing, which is a great pity. I've under-

stood he has no children, and is worth thirty thousand dollars. I suppose he reckons I'm worth full as much, and shan't take any *particular* pains to undeceive him. He hasn't actually declared himself yet, but I'm expecting every day when he will—at least, as soon as he learns that I'm about to leave, which I must do right away, Dora, for it costs even more than I reckoned, what with impudent chambermaids that won't hook up a lady's dress without they get a half dollar a time for it, and a quarter for a glass of ice-water, and a dollar a day to the hair-dresser, who differs the arrangement of my w-g (burn this when you get through, if you ever do, which is doubtful), each time, and makes it just like a real head of hair.

It takes money, and nothing but a good match can repay my outlay. However, I think the sea-air *is* doing me good, and I trust soon to get over the lingering remains of the exterminator. If he don't declare himself before I leave I shall invite him to visit Pennyville; though I'd rather the matter would be settled before, as he would see then just what I was worth. What would you say, Dora, to my coming home a bride? Poor Timothy Bethuen would scarcely stand the shock. Be prepared for the best; and tell Susan to bake some pound cake.

But speaking of the hair-dresser, and my w-g, and Mr. Morton, and bathing, brings me to the accident which I spoke of in the beginning, and to the most serial misfortune which has befell me since I left home. O Dora, it makes me sick to think of it! Just when I was getting along so swimmingly! If I'd have stuck to my first resolutions it never would have occurred. I said you would understand that I had reasons for resisting all inducements to go a bathing in the turf. Of course you, being acquainted with the little secrets of the feminine toilet, know it would have very dilatory effect upon paint, false ringlets, etc., to get them wet. I didn't think I should come out of the trial quite as glowingly as the young girls, with red cheeks and plenty of their own hair blowing about, that laughed and frolicked, as independent as fishes, all around. Mr. Morton often solicited me to venture, and I always told him I was too much of a coward. Well, yesterday we was standing watching the rest, and he said to me, so persuadingly:

"Come, my dear Miss Slimmens, *do* try it. There's nothing like it for renewing the blood and making people get fat—good, substantial flesh. Sea-bathing is famous for fattening folks; it is the *only* charm in which you are lacking. Allow me to whisper that I understand something of feminine objections, and

that I will insure you against accident. We will venture in but a little ways; I will support you; the *bloom of your cheeks* and the *beauty of your curls* shall not suffer in the least. I will take care of them. Go, prepare yourself; you will look charmingly in a Turkish bathing costume."

I wanted to try it so much that I allowed myself to be persuaded. I entered one of those shanties, or camps, or whatever they call 'em, and got ready. My mind misgave me as I set foot in the water; but he assured me so firmly of his protection that I allowed myself to be led on. There was hundreds of people all about us, giggling, and shivering, and frolicking, and some of 'em ducking and letting the turf roll over them as if they were so many fishes. We only went out a little ways, for I wasn't very firm on my feet, and I was afraid one of those big waves would come up too close to us; but either Morton is very deceitful, or else the ocean is, for, just as I was standing there looking at the rest, and feeling the pressure of his arm about my waist, and only a little over knee-deep in water, along came a monstrous roller—and the next thing I knew I was gasping, and floundering, and smothering. I thought I was drownding. I never had such a fright but once previously, and that was when I took the arsenic.

When I came to my senses a little, Mr. Morton was wiping my face with his handkerchief, and, of course, taking off every speck of artificial there was on it.

"I'm very sorry, Miss Slimmens," said he, "that you've got wet. I'd no idea that breaker was so extensive. It almost took *me* off my feet, and I'm an old bather."

But I didn't realize a word he said. I felt a cold sensation about my head; I put up my hand—O Dora! imagine my emotion—my w-g was gone.

At the instance I made the discovery, the turf came rolling back again, and there, upon its foaming crest, floated my beautiful, my beloved, my expensive w-g.

"Save it!" I shrieked.

Adonis made a lurch for it—but it was too late; it was gone—forever!

Doubtless at this moment it is wildly tossing upon the cruel Atlantic, saturated with brine, its glossy ringlets torn into a million separate hairs, while I sit here writing to you, and deploring its loss.

That isn't the worst of it, either. I looked about—horror of horrors!—every one was looking at us and laughing, even the children. I know that I must be a ridiculous figure.

"Take me out; get me back into the camps, quick!" I exclaimed, and Adonis—it's second

nature to call him by that name—assisted me ashore, looking as grave as a judge.

I dressed as quick as I could; but when I came to tie that charming hat, so becoming to my long curls, upon my head, I felt that my glory was departed. Yet I was impelled to go to my hotel, and enter it in broad daylight in the face and eyes of a hundred staring men. If ever I realized the worth of a veil, it was then. I would have given all the money in my trunk for a yard of brown *barege*, but I had nothing of the kind along with me.

The fright, and the embarrassment, and everything, has made me faily sick; besides, I can't stir from my room until my hair-dresser has completed another, which he is doing as fast as he can. Several ladies have knocked at my door to inquire after my health, but I have not admitted a soul. My only consolation under this afflicting dispensation is that my admirer, Mr. Hopkins, the widower, was not among the spectators—at least, I do not think he was. He was not on the beach, and from the hurried glance I cast the windows and piazzas, as I entered our hotel, I concluded he was taking his noon nap. I trust I shall be myself again by to-morrow, and that something decisive will then take place.

I must leave here by the day after, as my funds will be exhausted by that period. So

you may expect me to follow my letter up pretty close. If it should be a Mrs. Hopkins, instead of a Miss Slimmens, you are called upon to welcome, do not be surprised; curiouser things have happened. Pull Caturah's hair if she don't mind you. Tell Mr. Bethuen I'm convinced there's a great deal of sin and wickedness at watering-places. And be sure that Susan bakes that cake and frosts it. Don't let George see this letter. For a brief space yet, your affectionate friend,

ALVIRA SLIMMENS.

P.S.—Don't tell Mr. Bethuen about my dancing the polka; it's scarcely consistent with my position as a professor, and I suppose I hadn't ought to; but the temptation was irresistible, and if the folks at home don't get to talking and scandalizing about it, there'll be no great harm done. I'm going to repent of it as soon as I get married, and settle down, and get things off my mind a little, so's I can have an opportunity to compose my reflections. I intended to be sorry for it when I done it, as soon as I had a good chance.

P.P.S.—I hope Caturah hasn't got into them purserves on the top shelf of the pantry. Keep an eye on her, please.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A COUPLE OF WALL-FLOWERS.

A WALL-FLOWER? Oh, no; I'm sitting here just to rest myself. I've danced and promenaded till I'm tired out. I don't think there's a young lady in the room been *asked* oftener than I have this evening; but my health's rather delicate, and I don't desire to over-exert myself. 'Tain't for want of solicitations to do otherwise that I'm resting myself, Mrs. Granger.

How does sea-bathing agree with my health? Oh, first-rate. Jest observe that Mrs. Sullivan waltzing with that furriner; she flies around like a flounced top. If I was her husband I'd put a stop to her conduct, or I'd shet her up in a convent. What conduct? Oh, I don't know. Watering-places are awful things to spread talk, and all I know is what I've heard, and of course I don't purtend to believe all I hear. Anybody can see for themselves that she's a dreadful flirt, but that isn't proving that she's a *bad* woman. It's silly and vain of her to gallavant around the way she does, but that isn't saying I believe what I've *heard*, common

talk as it appears to be. Oh, nothing; I'm not a-going to repeat scandal. Her name's mixed up with another person's oftener than is safe for her; but you must use your own eyes and ears if you want to satisfy yourself. They say it was just the same way last summer when she was here, only worse, if possible. Her husband bought a horsewhip one day, I've understood, and that a certain dashing old villain sought safety in flight the same afternoon; but it's probably dreadfully exaggerated—sech things commonly are. He's so generous to her, too—allows her two thousand a year pin-money; and she always in debt, they say, for all. Anybody can see how fond he is of her, and she ought to be ashamed, going on and breaking his heart. If she'd make herself as pretty to *him* as she does to other men, she'd be doing a little more as she ought to. But don't breathe a syllable of what I've told you, Mrs. Granger, for I'm not certain it's true: and if it is true, it's none of my business.

Jest throw a look back over your shoulder at that couple standing by the window. Oh, nothing—nothing at all; only, if we stay here many days longer, maybe we shan't have to inquire. A body would think they wasn't conscious there was a soul but themselves in the saloon, they're so absorbed in each other. She needn't break her fan, if he does whisper

to her in that killing style. There! she's shivered it all to atoms, and now she's laughing and blushing about it. Probably he'll present her with another equally expensive, and she'll accept it, if she *is* a married woman, and hadn't ought to. I never saw him before to-night. Do you know his name? Her husband? Oh-h-h, *that* makes a difference, of course; but I should think they'd better keep their love-making for their own private entertainment. If there's anything real sickish, it's this billing and cooing between married people in public.

Oh, dear! did you ever! *That* dress takes the rag off the bush! If it was a little shorter at the bottom, and a little longer at the top, it would be improved. Sweet, did you say? Oh, it's pretty enough, and too pretty. They say she's ruining her husband by her extravagance. That's the twentieth dress *I've* seen her have on since I came. But anybody with a pair of shoulders like them must set 'em off at any price, if their husband *is* ruined, and their character, too. Black eyes and white necks are very nice, but they don't make good wives, as *some* men know to their sorrow.

What a sweet young man! Do you know him? I feel sure he is a poet—he has such a pensile appearance, and such a high white forrid. I wish I was introduced to him. It's pleasant to meet a congestive breast in a scene

like this. Oh! yes, I sometimes woo the Muses simply for my own pleasure. I've published a few pieces, but I don't pretend to be an authoress. The most of my suffusions slumber in the retiracy of my portfolio. If the world chooses to claim them after I'm dead, it can have them. I shall leave them copied out in a clear, eligible hand, simply for the benefit of my friends. I've been solicited to publish a volume of my fugitive productions, but have ever hesitated. Of course, "filthy lucre" would be no inducement to a person of my means, and I'm indifferent to the bugle voice of fame.

You don't say so? Worth a million dollars? Of course he married her for her money, for she's as humbly as a mud fence. Silks and satins can't make *her* handsome. Isn't she dreadful yellow? She looks like a piece of white silk that's been washed and ironed. Got a high temper, too, I'll bet, by the turn of her nose and the look of her eyes. Her husband seems utterly subdued; I'll bet she snubs him. He looks as if she was continually telling him how much money she had brought him. It's good enough for him, though; shouldn't have made such a fool of himself. If anybody should marry *me*, and I should have reason afterward to suspect it was my means they married, they wouldn't lead a very easy life of it; I'd keep 'em as uncomtortable as a kernel

of corn on a hot griddle. If I ever do make up my mind to except any of the male sex as a husband, I shall wed from love alone.

See them young chits, dancing and talking and flirting like so many young ladies. They ought to be spanked and sent to bed! I don't know what their mothers can be thinking of, to let 'em carry on so in a public house. Anxious to get 'em married off, I suppose; mothers'll go to any length, nowadays, to get rid of their daughters. If I'd went, and gone, and had children, I think I'd take care of 'em till they was of age, and not put 'em up in market, and show 'em off to the best advantage, like a milliner the bunnits in her show-window. Puts you in mind to ask if *I* was ever a milliner? Do you intend to insult me? Oh! you'd *heard;* well, people shouldn't believe all they hear, 'specially at watering-places. I've heard *you* used to be a vest-maker before Mr. Granger married you, and that you made a vest for him was the way he come to fall in love with you. Of course you'll deny it, but people that live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones. For my part I consider one honest person as good as another, whether they ever did anything for a living or not; but low people that have got up in the world suddenly, generally put on airs. If I ever *had* been a milliner, I shouldn't be ashamed of it.

They say that pale girl over there in the blue brocade is dying of consumption, which means dying of love. She doesn't look as if she'd have strength of mind enough to bear a disappointment. For my part, I could bear a hundred disappointments, and not show it. I'd never let one of the masculine sex have it to boast that I was broken-hearted on *his* account. What? Do I speak from experience? Perhaps I do, and perhaps I don't. Her lover died, did he? Oh, that's a different matter. I admire constancy; it's a very poetical quality. I mean to write some verses, and send them to the poor girl to comfort her.

Do see that Widow Wilkins sail along in her second mourning! She's perishing to take it off, for she thinks it doesn't become her. I don't know why, but I detest widows. They're a vain and self-complacent set, the whole of 'em, and sure to get married again, even when they've more babies than they have dollars. I can't account for it, and I hate 'em.

Poor Mrs. Watkins! how she suffers this warm weather! All the fans in the house can't keep her from being as red as a piny, she's so fat. It's a great misfortune to be so fat; I'd rather be as lean as a lath than as cumbersome as she is. Fat folks always dress in such abominable taste! There she is, sweltering in that black silk, for the sake of looking a little smaller

than she really is. Short sleeves on those big arms! they look like bags of flour.

Well, well, Newport's a curious place, and *I* think it's a wicked place. There's all kinds of naughty doings carried on here, they say—wine and billiards, and vanity and wickedness. Most of people seem to come here jest to show themselves, if they're women; and to drink, and play, and do as they hadn't ought to, if they're men. It's enough to make a reflecting person sick at heart. And it's such a place for talk, too. I've heard more scandal since I came here than I could repeat in a year. It's dreadful; I don't know what the world is a-coming to. For the land sake, if that giddy Mrs. Sullivan ain't a-dancing again! Well, well, *I* shan't say what I think of her, for I don't believe in talking.

CHAPTER XIX.

ALL IS NOT GOLD THAT GLITTERS.

WELL, Dora, you've kept the house as neat as a new pin; there don't appear to be anything sitting around or wasted. I'm really very much obliged to you. Yes, I'm glad to be to home again, though I had a fine time, and saw a good deal of the world in my absence. But it went hard to spend so much money; however, I trust it'll *pay*. How am I looking? don't you think I've improved in my style, as well as my countenance? I weigh five pounds more'n I did when I left here, warm as the weather has been. You needn't be afraid to intimate me in anything you may see me do or say that's new, for I've been associating with the best society, and I intend to be the model of the fashionable people of Pennyville. I enjoyed it hugely, passing myself off for a million-heiress. The young gentlemen followed my footsteps wherever I moved, and fluttered about me like bugs around a candle. I could have had my pick out of a hundred; but, as I feared they were not entirely disinterested, of course I turned a deaf ear to all their entreaties,

which didn't prevent my taking advantage of their devotion to bring me ice cream, and walk with me, and stand by me in the windows, and take me out to ride, and so forth. If it had not been for that unfortunate little accident about the wig, I should not have had an occurrence to dampen my enjoyments. I've no doubt people, especially of my own sex, would have liked to have made more fun about it than they durst to openly; but it won't pay to laugh too much at the expense of a million-heiress—it isn't fallacy—and so the world held its tongue remarkably, considering—all but the widows and old maids, and I snapped my fingers at them.

How about that wedding-cake?—hem! I shan't want it jest yet; but I shall before long. That's the great secret of the whole, Dora. I'm engaged—engaged to Mr. Hopkins, point blank, and no mistake. The reason he did not accompany me home, and have the banns consummated immediately, is, that his health renders it necessary for him to remain by the seashore during the warm weather; but he's coming to pay me a visit about the 10th of September.

Set a thief to catch a thief! That man's a regular fortune-hunter, and he thinks me plenty richer than I am; but he's got money of his own—nigh on to twenty thousand dollars—and I'll get his money, if he don't get mine. Turn

about is fair play; he's no business to be so mercendary himself, if he don't want to be paid in his own coin. I saw through him as clear as a pane of glass; but he's respectable, and aristocratical, and rather good-looking, and a favorite among my own sex, and I didn't feel bound to throw so good a chance away. I'm afraid it's a little resky, letting him come to Pennyville first; but he made the arrangement himself, and I didn't know exactly how to get out of it.

Good Lord, Dora, you ought to see the women at Newport! You'd get some new ideas in that innocent head of yours. Of all the humbuggery, and the big-buggery, and the dressing, and flirting, and fooling, and pretenses, and extravagance, and worse—they need a minister to preach to them worse than the heathens that worship crocodiles. Such things as I riveted out by making good use of my senses! I tell you, I put this and that together, till I got the truth of many a pretty story; and I didn't feel bound to keep it to myself either; for, if people do what they hadn't ought to, they must expect to suffer the consequences.

I guess some people were glad when I came away. Folks that are painted and powdered don't like to be scanned through too sharp a pair of spectacles, 'specially of the magnifying kind. I didn't care for the enemosity of the

females, so long as the men were as polite as they were; I didn't go to Newport to get in the good graces of women. Women hate each other; it's human nature. Of course, since I joined the church, I don't say that I hate any of my fellow-creatures, except widows. They're so designing and so seducing, I can't abide 'em, and I won't purtend to. 'Tain't rivalry alone makes women despise each other so; it's because they can see right through one another. The men get the wool pulled over their eyes, and they're flattered and fooled so, they don't see it; but *we* see each other at it, and we understand it, and we know how it's done, and why they did it, and all about it. What's sweetness, and innocence, and prettiness to the men, is artfulness, and complicity, and vanity to us. Law, Dora, we laugh in our sleeves at the men, and we like 'em at the same time; but we don't love each other when we laugh at one another. We're dreadful backbiters, the whole of us—except a few like you. I can't remember I ever heard *you* say anything ugly about anybody—not even about Philista Podd, when she was trying so hard to catch your George. There comes that quiet little smile of yours, which means, I s'pose, that you were too certain of George's heart to be troubled about Philista; but even if I *was* certain, if I'd been in your place, I couldn't a-helped showing her

how triumphant you was; but you was just as meek as a dove, and as kind and polite to her as if you didn't know she'd give her head to be in your shoes. And she's got Mr. Barker, what with running here to catch Mr. Little; so she didn't quite throw away her time and trouble. Mr. Barker, beside of George, is like a duck beside a swan; but he's just the husband for Philista, and you're just the wife for George. I can afford to say it, since I had sech a hand in making the match. And, since I'm in a fair way to make a very opprobrious union myself, I can afford to let other folks be as happy as they're a mind to.

Look! jest look at old Mehitable going by. She looks worse'n ever. I guess she sees my trunks piled up in the hall, the way she stretches her long neck, peeking in. Poor old thing! *she* hain't got money to take her to Newport. She'll hatch up a new nest of stories about me now, see if she don't, she'll be so spiteful. It will be an awful spell of weather that'll keep her to home next Sunday; she'll come to meeting to see what I've got on, and how I look. It's a sin and a shame what some people go to church for. If it wasn't they were afraid they should be set down for heathens, and they want to see who's there, and if they've got a new bunnit, or turned and trimmed their old silk, or who's going to join, or get married, or have

their baby baptized, they'd never go near. They don't go to hear the word, nor to repent of their wickedness. They set, and purtend to be listening to the minister, while their thoughts are running on their neighbors as busy as ants on an ant-hill. If there's anything particularly sweet and good about a body, they'll fix on that to gnaw and destroy all the sugar of the best disposition. They feast themselves on good qualities, so if any one's a good deal remarked about, it's a certain sign there's something eatable about 'em. I'm going to wear the very best I've got next Sunday, because I know there'll be some who'll come to criticise and find out what I've got. That bunnit, you know, I bought just before I left home, and I haven't worn it in Pennyville yet.

But speaking about home reminds me I've got back to mine, with plenty to do. Them trunks are to be unpacked and set away, and the girls seen after, and—oh, dear me! since I've had such a resting-spell it comes hard to take hold again. I've been so used to being waited on, and having servants running after me, it don't seem natural to be waiting on other folks. I can stand it a month or six weeks longer, and then we'll see who's ready to take her boarders off Alvira Slimmens' hand. I've a notion to offer the business to Mehitable Green. My! wouldn't the boarders groan in

soul and body under her dispensations? I make no doubt she's as penurious as she's avaricious. Them kind of pinched up old creatures always are. La! I never get done talking if I don't quit some time. I haven't begun my story yet, but must go about my unpacking now.

Here Susan! Caturah! take hold and carry these things up-stairs. I'll take them dresses myself—they're my nice ones. These old calicoes and things I jest stuffed in to fill more trunks; it's fashionable to have lots of baggage. Throw this salt-bag full of sand out in the street. I've paid extra on my trunks on account of their weight; for I was determined they should pass for all they were worth. Some folks guessed there was gold in 'em.

La! Mr. Bethuen, how *do* you find yourself? I've got back, you see. You're the first of my family, except Dora, I've had the pleasure of welcoming. Thank you; my health's very much improved. Nothing but the probability of improving it would have induced me to go to so pleasure-seeking and frivolous a place as Newport. I've learned a lesson in vanity and display, Mr. Bethuen. "All is not gold that glitters"—no, no! anybody that's been to Newport can say, with Solomon, "All is not gold that glitters."

CHAPTER XX.

SHE RECEIVES A PRESENT.

THERE goes the nose off that tea-pot, at last! I jest knocked the cover of the sugar-bowl against it, and off it come. These china tea-sets ain't good for nothing, 'specially in a boarding-house. There's scarcely a piece in the whole set that isn't cracked or nicked, or got the knob, or the nose, or the handle gone. I'd *like* to see my table better set, not so much on my own account as my boarders. You're all of you gentlemen, and I'd *like* to treat you to a stylish table if I could afford it; for instance, one of them plated tea-sets that look just as well as the solid silver, in Robinson's window. They're only thirty-five dollars. It wouldn't be but a trifle if a *number* of persons were a-getting it, but for *one* person, and she a woman, with a living to get, it's considerable. Some people have the good luck to have such things *given* to 'em. I've known of boarding-house keepers that had given satisfaction, and whose boarders had stayed by 'em for some time, getting handsome presents of silverware—which is a very appropriate gift, and always acceptable.

Not that I wish any of mine, even those that have been members of my family since I commenced, to think of taking up a subscription to make *me* a present of a tea-set, much as I need it; and I should feel hurt and mortified if anybody suspected me of hinting at such a thing. If my young men, after my freedom in speaking, go and buy that set at Robinson's, I shall feel positively offended. I shall refuse to accept it, or, at any rate, if I *do* accept it, it will be because I feel it the unprompted token of their interest and good feeling for the woman who has endeavored to make her house their home.

Excuse me, Mr. Smith; I didn't perceive your cup was out. It's awkward pouring out of a tea-pot with a broken nose. It reminds me of those kind of people, mostly young ladies, who are forever hinting about presents from young men; and the reason they have so much jewelry and pretty things is, because they haven't the pride not to beg for them; for, begging it is, call it what they may, this hinting and hinting about, admiring everything they see, and wishing they had it, and dragging young men to concerts and into ice cream saloons, and hitching on to their arms at fairs, and saying "How cheap this is," and "What a love that is," and stopping before the windows of jewelry shops, and pointing out that *sweet*

bracelet, or that *darling* brooch, and all them tricks that I understand so well—that is, from observation. I despise such artifice! Now, there was Belinda Bell—I saw her last week looking at, and admiring, and going into fits over a pair of sleeve-buttons, gold set with tortoises, that Abram Smith was a-wearing; and last night, to Tuttle's party, she had them very sleeve-buttons on, and an arrow stuck in her hair that I'm certain I saw in Mr. Moss' cravat not long ago. I make no doubt she's got all her jewelry in that way, which is the reason she's got more than other handsomer girls that ain't quite so bold. *I* never lured a young gentleman into a jewelry-shop in my life. I've even made it a matter of conscience to return the gifts of them that I didn't mean to encourage; I've sent back nobody knows how many dollars' worth of trinkets from admirers that I didn't wish to deceive. Still, presents from *boarders* would of course be considered in a different light.

Some more of the pickled salmon? No, there ain't a bit more in the house; but there's plenty of dried beef if anybody will have some. Caturah's out bringing in the clothes; but when she comes in, I'll have her bring it out of the cellar and chip some off. Speaking of salmon, especially smoked salmon, reminds me of a dozen solid silver forks, with her name on, that

I saw on Mrs. Lummis' table the last time I was over. She had pickled salmon for tea, and one of the forks was on the platter; they were a present from her boarders—lovely forks they were! I declare I envied her. "Mrs. Lummis," said I. "you do have *such* luck! Nobody'd think of giving *me* silver forks, not if I sewed on their buttons for years for 'em." Howsomever, I've got forks enough. I don't stand in any particular need of anything but a new tea-set; and if my best friend should ask me, "Miss Slimmens, what would be the first wish of your heart, if anybody should say they was going to give you something?" I should exclaim, "That dear, sweet set of tea things in Robinson's window!" But, dear! what have I said? I'm afraid—dreadfully afraid some construction will be put upon my remarks. I beg you, gentlemen, to forget them. They all grew out of my breaking the nose off my best china tea-pot.

Dora, there's a box! Come and help me get it open; but I know what's in it well enough. It's that splendid plated set we were looking at the other day. No matter how I knew it. It was only last evening, at the table, when I broke my china tea-pot, some of the gentlemen spoke of making me a present; and here it's only ten o'clock of the next morning, and it's come! There's a note along with it; I'll read

it while Caturah's gone to get the hammer. My boarders are a nice set of young gentlemen; they can take a hint of the most delicate nature. without any necessity for a person's speaking out. What a plain, handsome handwriting! Let's see what it says:

"DEAR SLIMMENS: Do not consider us *of-fish-us* in making you the slight present which you will find in the accompanying box. It is the first *course* we have taken to acknowledge your *desserts*. We cannot express our *scents* of obligation in any more forcible manner than by selecting this beautiful specimen of *table service*, which we hope to see in the future (as it has been in the past) the daily ornament of your board. With emotions *grater* than we can express, and the *strongest* remembrances of the past, for your *ef-fish-ent* labors in our behalf, we beg of you to accept the inclosed. We all feel that you are very *near* to us, and very *dear*. May you live a thousand years, and never be any older than you are at present. You have been weighed in the *scales*, and not found wanting.

"Tenderly yours, etc.,

"BOARDERS."

Isn't it queer? Just like my young gentlemen—can't do the handsomest thing without their joke about it. Caturah, come along with that hammer, will you? Now, then, the lid's off. How nice it's all done up in cotton and tissue-paper! We're coming to them now.

This must be the spout of the tea-pot. But, my! how funny it smells!

A codfish, and nothing else! Was ever a poor, unprotected female so put upon as I am? It's not enough that I must wear my feet off waiting on a parcel of sassy, provoking fellows, but they must up and ridicule me to my face and insult me in this diabolical manner. It's a burning disgrace to them. I've a notion to dismiss every single one of 'em this noon without a mouthful of dinner. But they'll only go off to the public-house, and have a grand time, and laugh at me. Besides, I can't afford it. That Hopkins hasn't come on from Newport yet, and until I'm married to somebody I've got to keep boarders for a living. But they'll repent it, I can tell 'em that. They haven't made me mad for nothing. Here, Caturah, take this fish, and have it boiled for dinner. Don't you put another solitary thing upon the table except the dishes. Lay the table in good style, and put the fish in the middle of it. I'll have something sent to your room for *your* dinner, Dora, so you needn't come down. We'll see about this impertinence!

It's a beautiful day, gentlemen — beautiful. Quite gorgeous for October. This cool weather gives us a fine appetite. Mr. Smith, I'll trouble you to carve. Won't you be helped to *more*, Mr. Johnson? Not that I wish to be

officious, but I know you are particularly fond of codfish. Don't be backward, Mr. Bethuen, *don't*. No, thank you, not a bit; I'd rather talk than eat; I've had *my* dinner. You don't seem in very good spirits, the most of you. Have you heard of the death of any of your acquaintance? Mr. Smith, give Mr. Bunks some more of the cod. I was hoping you'd all feel as well as I do to-day. What! you aren't done? You haven't half finished your dinners. There be fish enough left to pick up for supper. Would you relish it picked up for supper, gentlemen? You shall have it then by all means. I love to please my boarders—oh, yes, above all things!

Goodness gracious! can I believe my eyes? An entire new tea-set, just as handsome as the solid silver—the very one I had picked out in my mind's eye—standing on my own table, before my own eyes, with sugar in the bowl, and cream in the jug, and tea in the pot, and all! What does this mean, gentlemen? Another note in the sugar-bowl. Well, well, I declare I'm so agitated with pleasure and surprise that I can hardly peruse it.

"BELOVED SLIMMENS: We acknowledge the corn—or, rather, the cod. At our *second dinner*, at Crousi's Hotel, to-day, we unanimously concluded, over the last cup of coffee, to take up a collection for the purpose of expressing our feelings for the lady who has so long and so

ably ministered to our needs. Bury the remains of past repasts. Be good to us. Give us more sugar in our tea. Cast thy bread (and cake) upon the waters, and after many days it shall return to thee (on a silver plate). Please put a little 'gunpowder' in the new tea-pot. Do not be afraid; it will not go off of itself. Milk is warranted not to injure the inside of the milk-jug. And ever, when you think of eggs, remember muffins, and do not forget the weakness of your confiding

"BOARDERS."

CHAPTER XXI.

DORA'S BABY.

THAT ever I should have had such a thing happen in my house! Me, a respectable single woman, with a house full of young men and gentlemen boarders, and such goings-on in it! It's shameful, perfectly shameful! She ought to have known better than to have gone and got married. What did she go and get married for? Didn't she know it would come to this? Why didn't she firmly refuse all solicitations as I have? Thank goodness, it isn't me! But if it isn't me, it's Dora, and that's about as bad. She's been a good little thing, Dora has; she's put up with all my sayings and doings like an angel. I didn't know I did think so much of her. Oh, dear! I wonder how she's getting along! I've a mind to go to the door and ask. But I won't; it's good enough for her! What did she get married for? that's the question. But they'll all do it—yes, every one of them—just as quick as they are asked! There hasn't a girl in this town held out till she was thirty but myself.

I've tangled this silk, and broke my needle,

and spilled my thimble. Pshaw! I can't sew; I'm too nervous. What's that? Oh, it's you, is it, Mr. Little? You needn't come a-sneaking into my room for pity. I despise you. Oh, she'll die, I know she will, and you'll be responsible for her death. I've had a presentiment all the time she would die. There, you needn't groan; I didn't mean to make you any more miserable than you are, poor fellow! But I had an awful dream last week; I dreamed about white roses, and they're a sure sign of death in the family, especially at this season of the year. Flowers out of season purtend death, and white roses, of all others! Still, I don't wish to scare you. Maybe she'll get along. I wonder what the boarders will say when they hear the news. I sot to the dinner-table as cool as a cucumber, and didn't let a soul know what was going on in the house. It'll be time enough when they hear it squall; yes, George, *squall!* Don't think you're going to have a cherub with wings, that'll laugh and clap its hands the first day. Little babies are the ugliest things in creation. Red-faced, red-armed, red-necked, screaming, kicking, colicky, squirming—bah! And everybody will tell you it's the very picture of its father. If you ever had any vanity, as all men have oceans of it, you'll get it took down a little on this occasion. The picture of its father! Oh, yes; the very pic-

ture! Flat-nosed, blank-eyed, crimson, squalling little bundle, the very picture of its handsome papa! ha! ha! Oh, you're in a nice scrape, ain't you? and it's good enough for——

Mercy, Susan, how you frighten a person! I thought you'd come to say the nurse had sent word Dora was dead, or dying, or something, and here it's only to bother me about tea. Do get tea for once in your life yourself, without asking any questions. Don't you see I'm in a state of mind bordering on detraction, with boarding married people? Shut the door.

Do sit down, George, and don't make such a fool of yourself, walking around like a hyena in a cage! There! what on earth was that? Nothing but that pesky cat, got in the house again. I thought it was a baby crying. I hope this circumstance will be sufficient to warn *me* against ever getting *my* foot caught in the trap. What the female sex ever marry for is a mystery. I don't aspire to be considered a strong-minded woman, but I trust I shall ever have strength of mind sufficient to enable me to resist the inducements of a husband and children. You'll repent this day, young gentleman, the worst of any in your life. Instid of your quiet evenings, sitting reading to Dora, or playing backgammon, or singing, it'll be catnip tea and colic. All the peace you'll get for the next six months you may put in my

thimble here, and it won't run over. It's good enough for you! My best wish is that you won't have two hours' consecutory sleep in a year.

Do clear out and go in the parlor, if you can't keep still a minute. I never saw a man act so much like a fool. But I don't wonder you look like a robber or a felony. I suppose if Dora dies you'll console yourself with—Bless me! *that* was a genuine baby's squall! Just hear the little panther. Ha! ha! what makes you so red in the face, George? you've changed color all of a sudden. *Don't* you wish you knew whether it was a boy or a girl? Run upstairs and ascertain, you goose!

He! he! he went up like a rocket. Well, if I ever thought George Little would be flustered by anything! These men are too ridiculous for anything. I must go and see whether Dora's dead or alive, and whether it's a girl or a boy.

He! he! gentlemen, you needn't expect Mr. Little's company at the tea-table. I don't suppose he could swallow a mouthful before tomorrow morning. He don't feel the necessity of vittals, oh, no! he's living on his vanity at present. A boy, *of course!* a fine, plump, healthy boy. But he! he! gentlemen, really I beg your pardon for mentioning what has occurred. But as Dora has been like a twin

sister to me, I couldn't turn her out of the house in consequence of her getting married. I don't approve of marriages, the reason I make it a rule to take only single gentlemen to board. I'm single myself, and ever intend to remain singular. Nothing in the world could tempt me to do as Dora's done—get married, and have, but, bless me! *what* am I talking about? I blush to think it. Gentlemen, excuse my overwhelming confusion.

Seventeen apprentices have I had in all, since I commenced the millinery business for myself, seventeen, and every one of them wives and mothers, even to Dora, the last and youngest of the lot! I declare I do feel lonesome, setting here by myself, reflecting on my fate and that little pink innocent asleep in its crib—it makes me feel dreadful lonesome. I could cry this minute. It's no fault of mine, neither; if ever a woman tried faithfully to find a pardner, it's been Alvira Slimmens. I haven't left a thing undone that could be done to bring about a different state. I've toiled faithfully from one year's end to another, I've made money, and I've spared no expense to render myself attracting; yet here I am, setting solitary in my boarding-house, my boarders wrapped in the arms of Orpheus, and Dora's baby asleep in its crib, with rose-colored curtains around it. I don't wonder George is

proud of a boy like that. Somehow, when I went into the room and saw Dora lying there, looking so sweet, and pale, and pretty, and her husband so triumphant, and took that little bundle of flannel and lace in my arms, instead of being disgusted, as I expected, a great lump came up in my throat, and I felt like bursting right out a crying. Heigh-ho!

I've jest about made up my mind, setting here and thinking it over, that, sence Mr. Hopkins didn't keep his promise to pay a visit to Pennyville, but keeps putting it off and putting it off, in the undefinable manner he does, the next time I can catch Timothy Bethuen all alone by himself I'll just pop the question to him, out and out; it's leap-year, and I've a perfect right to. I'll offer to support him, and make him a good living—but I'm awful afraid he's engaged to that Philistina Podd. It won't be leap-year again for four years, and I shall take advantage of it while it lasts. I haven't had anything make me feel so lonesome and old in all my life as Dora's baby.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE BRIDAL DAY.

AT last! at last! Alvira Slimmens is a married woman! *no mistake this time.* At three o'clock this afternoon the ceremony was performed, in the presence of creditable witnesses, by the minister of my own church; and nothing has yet occurred to render it null and void. No professor's wife coming in *this* time to claim my lawful husband. I've took pains to procure the most dubious evidence that Mr. Hopkins is all that he assumes—a widower who has already buried two wives, a man of some property, and of a few children, who shan't bother me much, I can tell him. Fifty-six years of patient plotting and planning has at last brought me to my bridal. I will confess to myself, now, before Mr. Hopkins comes in, that this moment is not *all* that I have pictured it in years gone by; he is *ruther* old, though younger than I, and he's got young ones, and I know he married me for my property, and that I shall have to continue to keep boarders and support *him* instead of him me.

But I'm married, and Mehitable Green isn't, and that's triumph enough for one lifetime.

Nobody can say, neither, that Mr. Hopkins isn't a gentleman; there isn't a person in Pennyville who can compare with him in politeness. He's been to every fashionable resort in the United States, he dresses in the genteelest, most laboratory style, wears a gold eye-glass, takes snuff, and is far from a bad-looking man. It's true, he limps just the least bit in the world — rheumatiz, I suppose — but nobody would notice it; and his cheeks are as red, and his hair as black and shiny as though he wasn't but twenty-five, instead of forty, which he owns up to. Altogether he's a match not to be ashamed of; and I guess, when we go into church together next Sunday, there'll be some eyes that won't be fixed on the minister. It'll be the proudest moment of my existence. I make no doubt Mehitable Green would love to stay to home to show she didn't care, but she *can't;* curiosity will get the better of discretion.

THE DAY AFTER THE WEDDING.

For goodness, gracious sake, Mr. Hopkins, can you tell me who that carriage-load of young ones is, stopping at our door? Your family, Mr. Hopkins! One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine of 'em—quite a pretty present to bring your confiding bride the morn-

ing after her marriage. I suppose I may trot round now the rest of my life, taking care of them interesting specimens, and keeping boarders to support you and your wooden leg. Oh, Mr. Hopkins, but you're a match for me! How handsome and attracting we both looked when we got off our wigs and our false teeth, and you took out your glass eye, and asked me to help you off with your wooden leg. It was quite poetical, wasn't it? But let me tell you you haven't got so much the best of the bargain as you think; them great girls that I see trooping up the steps will have to give a little aid and assistance about keeping boarders for their father's benefit. I shall dismiss both my girls this very day. And mind, if you don't walk chalk with that wooden leg of yours, you'll find it in the fire some morning. It'll make excellent kindling wood. That leg gives me the advantage, you perceive, *my dear;* it won't do for you to quarrel with me. Take them young ones up-stairs to the back attic room to take their things off, and then come down and go to market, if your *rheumatiz* don't prevent you, *my love!*

My! but doesn't he go off as meek as a lamb! I've got him under my thumb already. "It's an ill-wind that blows nobody any good." He fooled me awfully about that limb of his, but he'll repent it; I'll rule him with his own

wooden leg, worse than a rod of iron. Well, well, well, this *is* a curious world; and this is what I've toiled and struggled for during thirty-five long years. Heigh-ho! Well, half a husband's better than none, 'specially if he can be got under good government. Only so's that old Mehitable never finds it out, that's all *I'll* ask. Nine children at a batch! Well, everybody must have their number, and I've got mine at last. Heigh-ho!

THE END.

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